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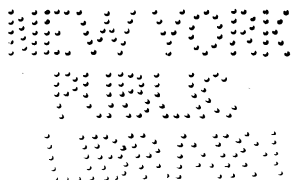
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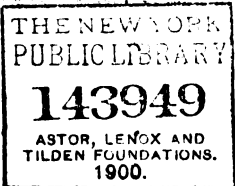
THE
DECAY OF SENSIBILITY
AND OTHER
ESSAYS AND SKETCHES

BY
STEPHEN GWYNN

JOHN LANE
THE BODLEY HEAD
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TO
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FROM WHOM I HAVE STOLEN MOST

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PREFACE

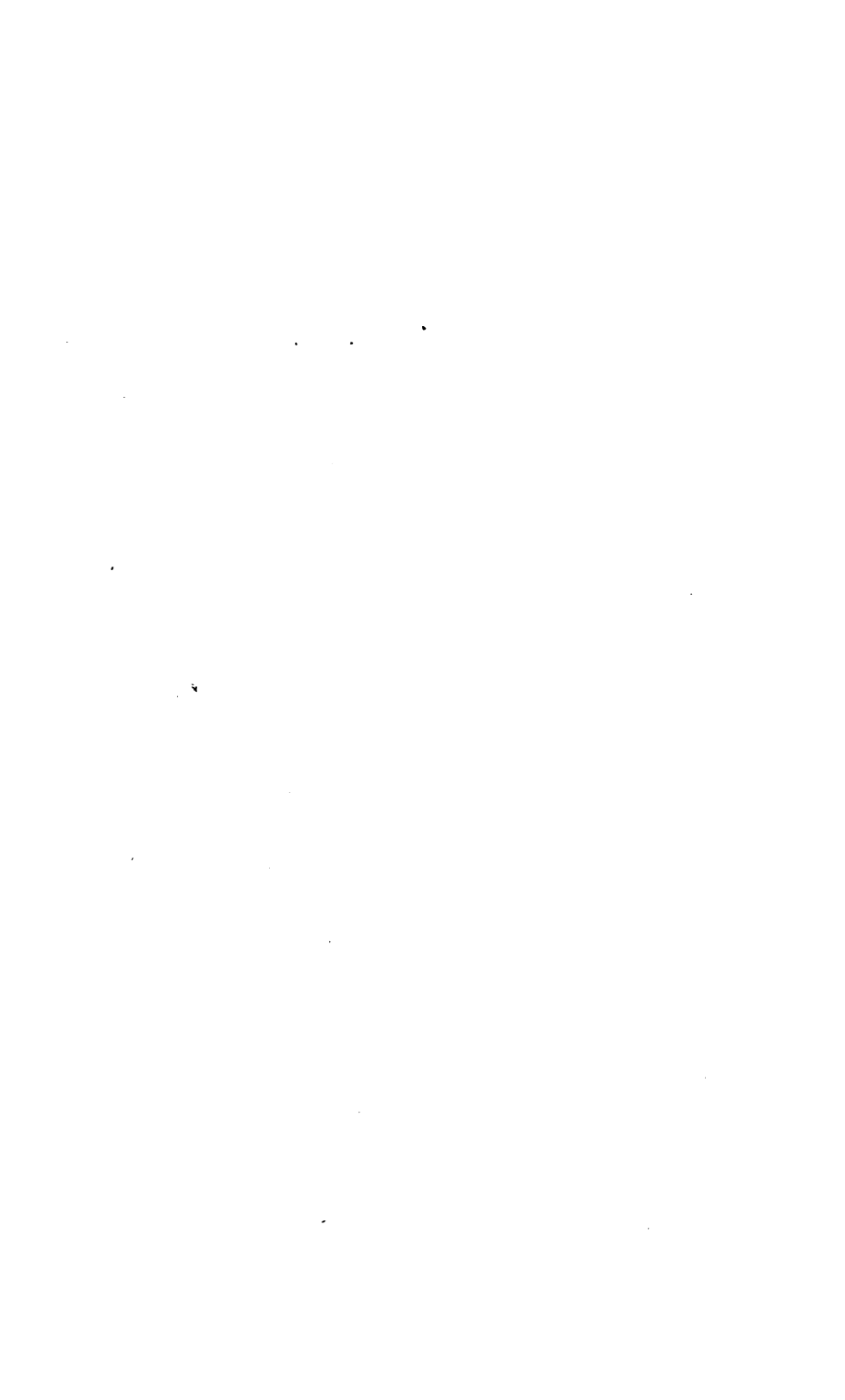
THREE of these papers are reprinted from the *Cornhill*, one from *Macmillan's Magazine*, one from the *Contemporary Review*; most of the others appeared either in the *Spectator*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Speaker*, or the *Pall Mall Gazette*. I make my best acknowledgments to the editors of these periodicals and journals for leave to reprint. The *National Observer*, for which the rest were written, cannot accord me the same permission, since unhappily it did not long survive my contributions; but I can still express my lasting gratitude to Mr. J. A. Vincent for the help and encouragement which he generously bestowed upon a struggling beginner.

S. G.



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THE DECAY OF SENSIBILITY.

MANY excellent persons have expressed a hope that in Paradise it may be their promotion to consort with those of the illustrious dead whose works or whose examples they have admired on earth. There are two sides to this pious aspiration, and it is a little sad to think of Shakespeare and Dante mobbed in the Elysian Fields by a host of mediocrities. Imagine Johnson pursued by the shade of Miss Pinkerton, who kept a famous academy in The Mall at Chiswick; conceive of Heine's motley and incongruous following. However, this is off the point; I only wish to say that I do not aspire to meet Miss Austen in Paradise. She must have been a most unlovable woman, and I cannot forgive her her ideals, not even for the sake of her dislikes. Half of her admirable people are frankly detestable—a parcel of prigs; her prudent Elinors, her sententious Edmunds and Edwards,

I cannot away with. Some touch of humanity shows itself in a weakness for the naval profession ; Captain Wentworth is quite tolerable, and Admiral Croft really to be liked. As for her women, there is even less to be said for them. Fanny, in "Mansfield Park," is a sort of human sea anemone ; Anne Elliot a vacillating creature, who is none the better because she is aware of the fact ; Emma, the unreformed, undisciplined Emma, is a nice, cheerful, pretty girl, but after she subsided into being Mrs. Knightly I fear she fell away sadly into conformity with the discreet and dull ideals of her creator. The truth about Miss Austen is that she lived in a mortally stupid, confined, narrow-minded society, and disliked her surroundings without feeling any desire to rise out of them. Her genius, which no one can question, was devoted to giving a representation of that society, which it would be a shame to call photographic, for it is as living and as merciless as any of Mr. Sargent's best portraits. She has done for the early years of this century what Trollope did for the fifties and sixties, but with even greater fidelity in her

cramped sphere. Trollope relied to a certain extent upon imagination; Miss Austen only wrote of what she absolutely knew, and to read her is the best way to measure precisely the distance which we have travelled since she wrote.

The change is so far-reaching and so finely graduated that it is a little difficult to define, for the people of whom Miss Austen wrote still exist, and exist very much as she knew them. It is not in their class that the daughters have latch-keys; or, if they come from that class, they depart from their surroundings and settle away from home, in London or elsewhere. Really there is nothing which marks the alteration in manners so well as the vocabulary. A number of terms then daily current are now superannuated. "Gentility" has disappeared, "elegance" is fast following it, and "delicate" is a word that we scarcely ever apply now to persons or conduct. People are not genteel or elegant any longer; the qualities have vanished as well as the names; they are "smart" instead; as for "delicate," I hardly know a modern equivalent. The antitheses

to all these things still flourish on our lips and in our lives; "vulgarity" is not a word that is in any way out of date, and "indelicacy" is still mentioned among us, though chiefly by old-fashioned people. It would be an interesting task for a student of the subject to point out exactly how the vulgarity of Miss Austen's day differed from the vulgarity of this; how the snobbish cult of position has been replaced by the snobbish cult of money; how the desire for "respectability" (which meant a country house and everything handsome about one) has been replaced by the desire for notoriety, which means a large income and entertainments that the papers write about. But my object is merely to point out the total disappearance of one quality, so well marked in Miss Austen's day that it gave a title to one of her novels, yet now, in so far as concerns its outward manifestations, nearly as extinct as the dodo. I mean, of course, what was called sensibility, the attribute which used to display itself by rapturous joy, by copious tears, by hysterics, and principally by fainting fits, upon the most inadequate occasions.

The change is so marked that one inclines to ask oneself whether the physical constitution of woman be not altered within the last half-century. The modern young woman does not swoon promiscuously. If she falls off her bicycle she may get concussion of the brain, just like her brother on the football field; if she gets an unusually severe blow on the nose with a hockey stick she may faint, as she might under a surgical operation; but she does not faint from sheer emotion. If either of the accidents to which I have referred were to happen, the sufferer's companions would pick her up and staunch the bleeding nose with due promptitude, whereas in Miss Austen's day they would have swooned—it was expected of them. A classical instance occurs to me which will be familiar to all readers of "Persuasion." It was not, however, familiar to a respectable divine, Fellow of his college, who happened to be staying one summer for a day or two at Lyme Regis, and hence arose a funny confusion. He received at his hotel a telegram, signed with a name perfectly familiar to him, for it was that of the

principal personage in his university, a scholar of European reputation, and the greatest novel-reader in Europe. But the message perplexed him vastly, for it contained simply these words : "*What height did Louisa Musgrove jump ?*" In his bewilderment he paid to have the message repeated, but precisely the same wording came back. Finally he concluded that by some odd conjuncture he was receiving a telegram addressed to a sporting character of the same name as himself, and that the inquiry related to the performance of some famous steeplechaser. It was only when he met the eminent scholar that he heard for the first time how Louisa Musgrove had accompanied Admiral Croft's party to Lyme Regis ; how they had gone to walk upon the Cobb, and how, because of the wind, they determined to go down the steps from the upper terrace to the lower ; how the rest of the ladies "were contented to pass quietly and carefully down the steep flight, excepting Louisa ; she must be jumped down them by Captain Wentworth," as was the custom in their walks

when the party came to a stile. The sensation was so delightful to her that, being safely down, she instantly ran up the steps to be jumped down again. "He advised her against it, thought the jar too great; but no, he reasoned and talked in vain. She smiled and said, 'I am determined I will.' He put out his hands. She was too precipitate by half a second; she fell on the pavement on the Lower Cobb, and was taken up lifeless." It had occurred to the eminent scholar, in considering this incident (the most sensational in any of Miss Austen's novels) that the modern young lady, if she had jumped, would certainly have alighted on her feet, and would probably not have been seriously injured; consequently, what he wanted was an accurate measurement of the height of the Upper Cobb (it is, I believe, about four and a half feet). In his enthusiasm for the writings of Miss Austen he never contemplated the possibility that the receiver of his telegram might not have read "Persuasion," and might be reduced to set down Louisa Musgrove as a blood mare. However, the interesting fact remains

that the young lady of Miss Austen's period, having jumped down four and a half feet, naturally alighted on her head, and also that, of the party looking on, her married sister screamed, "catching hold of her husband and contributing with his own terror to make him immovable"; while the unmarried one, Henrietta, "sinking under the conviction" of Louisa's death, "lost her senses too, and would have fallen on the steps but for Captain Benwick," who performed the duty continually incumbent upon man in those days, and supported her fainting form. Otherwise she also would probably have had concussion.

The quality which all these people displayed on this occasion was sensibility, and it can hardly be denied that the race is well rid of it. It is impossible not to sympathise with Mr. Charles Musgrove when we read on the next page how he "hung over Louisa with sobs of grief, and could only turn his eyes from one sister to see the other in a state as insensible, or to witness the hysterical agitations of his wife calling on him for help which he could not give." Anne Elliot,

who was present at the scene, did not swoon ; but Miss Austen, to do her justice, did not admire sensibility, and she continually sets it down to the credit of her heroines that they did not behave as they would naturally have been expected to do. Thus when Elinor Dashwood heard from Lucy Steele that Edward Ferrars, for whom she herself had a kind of tepid affection, was engaged to Lucy, it is recorded that "though her complexion varied, she stood firm in incredulity, and felt in no danger of a hysterical fit or a swoon." It was the more to her credit, because she lived in a swooning society. When her sister Marianne came to London in the train of Mrs. Jennings, and went to a party where she met the faithless Willoughby, it was natural enough that she should be greatly upset by his most unmannerly behaviour. Miss Austen describes what were in that day the usual symptoms of such a moral shock. "Looking dreadfully white and unable to stand, she sunk into her chair ; and Elinor, expecting every moment to see her faint, tried to screen her from the observation of

others while reviving her with lavender water."

The modern young lady is made of sterner stuff, and in all probability would have gone and flirted ostentatiously with some other man; but still not every young lady, even modern, is so resolute. What is clear is that now-a-days her elder sister would not have been so well furnished with the appliances for averting a catastrophe. In those days every woman seems to have carried in her pocket (and in a pocket which, unlike her modern counterpart, she was able to reach—in a practicable pocket) numerous cordials and restoratives for the use of herself and her friends in the emergencies which were constantly recurring. People fainted for every conceivable reason. When the elder Miss Steele incautiously announced Lucy's engagement to Mrs. John Dashwood, Edward's sister—who, as it will be remembered, purposed to marry Edward to a lady with thirty thousand pounds—Mrs. Dashwood "fell into violent hysterics immediately," with such screams as reached the ears of her husband where

he was sitting in his own dressing-room downstairs. Contrary to what one might have expected, "up he flew directly"—though he must have been well used, one would say, to Mrs. Dashwood's screams, and surely might have learnt to avoid the scene. Being recovered, no doubt by the exhibition of lavender water or some similar preparation, Mrs. Dashwood flew upon Miss Lucy Steele, who had rashly come to the rescue, and scolded her till the unfortunate young woman was forced to the superlative degree of sensibility and fainted. A Mrs. John Dashwood at the present day having to do with a Miss Lucy Steele, would simply decline to believe in the fainting fit, and, unless consideration for the drawing-room furniture checked her, would restore the sufferer to life by throwing cold water over her dress. Whether Lucy's swoon was genuine or not, Miss Austen does not avouch; it is merely reported by Mrs. Jennings, but it is reported as the most natural thing in the world, with the consequence that "poor Lucy was in such condition she could hardly walk." The statement in-

deed rests upon medical authority, for Lucy's fainting fit left Mrs. Dashwood with no resource but to fall into hysterics a second time, whereupon Mr. Dashwood sent for the doctor, and it was from his report that Mrs. Jennings derived her information.

Decidedly we have changed all that. A virago can scold and a minx can endure to be scolded now-a days without either hysterics or a fainting fit resulting. Tears still flow freely, but women as a rule are not proud of them. On the contrary, a young lady, I believe, will generally apologise for "making such a fool of herself." It is no longer considered to be an attraction, or even an amiable weakness, to be so feminine as all that; and no modern novelist, man or woman, would produce for admiration a heroine like Fanny in "Mansfield Park." Fanny is morally limp and physically a wet rag or sponge; tears exude from her whenever she is touched. She weeps when she mentions her brother who is at sea; and she weeps profusely when he returns to her. When I was reading about her I thought of a young

lady whom I questioned last spring about her brother then in Cairo. He was all right, she said, but they were all anxious to hear that his regiment had been sent to the front. Six months later he rode at the head of his troop in the charge of the 21st Lancers and came through, as it happened, without a scratch. I am sure that this sister was overjoyed, but I doubt if she shed tears of emotion, and I am certain that she never thought of swooning when she opened the newspaper. Miss Austen, or at least Miss Austen's heroines, would have thought her heartless; Emma would have wept, and Anne Elliot would assuredly have fainted at such intelligence, though they were very reasonable people for their age—Emma, indeed, was as destitute of any touch of passion as the author of her being. But Fanny remains the extreme case, and it is plain that so eminently sensible a person as Miss Austen thought it very nice of Fanny to cry so much; she has more tenderness for Fanny than for any of her other brain children. When Miss Crawford, the rival in Edmund's affections, was going away from Mans-

field she embraced Fanny affectionately, saying that it is "the last time of seeing you for I do not know how long." Fanny was affected. "She had not foreseen anything of this, and her feelings could seldom withstand the melancholy influence of the word 'last.'" So she wept upon Miss Crawford's neck, although she had no apparent reason to love that lady, and might with more excuse have melted into tears over the last gooseberry of summer or the last stitch in a piece of knitting.

Of course one believes perfectly in Fanny, for, in the first place, she is real, like all Miss Austen's people, and, like all the people whom Miss Austen approves of, she is sincere. I only wish to point out the change in our point of view. We have no longer any great tolerance for the sea anemone type of young woman, who is incapable of making a movement to help herself, but remains continually with feelers spread out anxious to clasp whatever comes near—Miss Crawford or another—simply because it happens to come near, and at the slightest shock shuts up into a pink, formless pulp. Miss Austen thought it quite an admi-

nable thing that a girl should behave like that, and no doubt Fanny existed. But if we want to know how that generation thought it admirable for a young lady to behave—what was the ideal of feminine conduct and feminine charm—we have to turn away from Miss Austen's realism, which merely tells us what young ladies in her day actually did, and look in other novelists for what they were expected to do. There is nothing romantic about Lucy Steele or Louisa Musgrove's sister when they swoon ; but they swooned because they belonged to an age when swooning was the fashion, and when one of the first qualities in a heroine—I mean in a real heroine, a heroine of melodrama—was that she should swoon picturesquely, and express nearly all her emotions by floods of tears. If there was ever a nature exempt from any undue proneness to the soft weaknesses of her sex it was Miss Ferrier's. Morally, mentally, and physically, she was, as one finds in the memoir of her, as tough as a woman can be made. Yet in her books, not only the characters whom she ridicules, but those whom she

delights to honour, are a prey to these overwhelming emotions, which apparently cut off the supply of oxygen from the lungs and arrest the heart's action. In her first novel, "Marriage," Lady Juliana seems to us a caricature, but Miss Ferrier's contemporaries received her for a portrait; and in Lady Juliana's first experiences of the Highlands all the stages are marked by swoons. When she and her husband came within sight of Glenfern Castle, Lady Juliana shuddered at the "hideous grim house." When it was borne in upon her that this was their destination she would undoubtedly have fainted, but that the ladies of that date seldom swooned unless they could do so with tolerable comfort. "Pale and speechless she sank back in the carriage" (this was the usual premonitory symptom), "but the motion of it, as it began to proceed, roused her to a sense of her situation, and she burst into tears and exclamations"—in short, she had a preliminary fit of hysterics. When she entered the house and was confronted with the three long-chinned spinsters and "five awkward

purple girls," she bore up heroically till the laird, in shaking hands with his daughter-in-law, "crushed her delicate fingers in his hard muscular gripe." Then the hysterics began again; she sobbed, screamed, and stretched out her hands to her husband, who supported her "almost lifeless" (the classical word) to their apartment, while the long-chinned aunts followed, all prescribing remedies—for even in the Highlands ladies went about as well provided as the prudent Elinor. Then Lady Juliana's maid, indignant at the accommodation provided for her, rushed in to show her mistress that no Lady Juliana should monopolise the feelings of gentility. "I am sure," she cried, "I thought I should ha' swooned when I was showed the hole where I was to sleep." At this insult her mistress passed from the sobbing to the screaming stage of hysterics. "In the utmost perplexity the unfortunate husband by turns cursed the hour that had given him such a wife" (a touch of nature); "now tried to soothe her into composure" (the endurance of husbands in those days is as incredible to ours as

the sensibility of Lady Juliana); "but at length, seriously alarmed at the increasing attack" (it is fair to say that he had only been married a few months) "he called loudly for assistance."

It would be tedious to follow Lady Juliana through all her emotions. After dinner on the same evening she was reduced for the third or fourth time to hysterics by the entrance of a piper, and, as was inevitable, "flew shrieking to her husband," who still sympathised and consoled her. Next morning, when she appeared at breakfast, "the laird laid a large piece of herring on her ladyship's plate." "What am I to do with this?" she exclaimed; "do take it away or I shall faint!" The family very rightly believed her capable of doing so—she was in that degree superior to her own maid, who only talked of swooning—and they removed the offence. This is caricature, no doubt; but caricature, to succeed must be only an exaggeration of truth, and anyone who pictured a modern maid or matron as dismayed or offended by the sight of a herring in the Highlands—were it even a bloater—would certainly

find people laugh at the author, not with him. No lady now-a-days is ashamed of her appetite or pretends to be a sylph at breakfast. But the truth is that the first fifty pages of "Marriage" are chiefly occupied with detailing the symptoms of successive weeping bouts, hysterical fits, and faintings; in the next fifty the manifestations diminish somewhat in frequency and intensity, but still at page 98 I find Lady Juliana in (I think) her sixth swoon, with Miss Bella administering smelling-salts and lavender water. But on this occasion there was no husband handy, so that the swoon passed off speedily and the ministrations were rejected; and on page 113 the delicate female departed from the Highlands, leaving behind one of her twin daughters in the care of Mrs. Douglas, the ideal matron. The child thus neglected and deserted by her fashionable mother grows up, as anyone would expect, into a pattern of all the graces and virtues. She has, at all events, all the qualities with which Miss Ferrier and her literary confidant, Miss Clavering, thought it proper to endow a heroine; and

here is the odd point :—Miss Ferrier, who, I am sure, never was overcome in her life by anything, felt it necessary to bestow upon her charming young lady the tenderest sensibility. When Mary grew up to have long dresses, it was thought desirable that she should join her family in London, and this is what happened : “The journey, like most modern journeys, was performed in comfort ; and late one evening Mary found herself at the goal of her wishes—at the threshold of the house that contained her mother !” (It must be observed that during the seventeen years of Mary’s life her mother had, according to the story, never shown the slightest interest in her, never seen her, nor even written to her. However, that did not check the flow of sensibility.) “One idea filled her mind, but that idea called up a thousand emotions. ‘I am now to meet my mother,’ thought she ; and, unconscious of everything else, she was assisted from the carriage and conducted into the house.” (The modern young lady has less imagination, but she can get out of a carriage unassisted.)

"A door was thrown open, but, shrinking from the glare of light and sound of voices that assailed her, she stood dazzled and dismayed till she beheld a figure approaching that she guessed to be her mother. Her heart beat violently—a film was upon her eyes; she made an effort to reach her mother's arms, and sank lifeless" (again that word) "on her bosom."

Now comes the really interesting point. "Lady Juliana—for such it was—doubted not but that her daughter was really dead; for though she talked of fainting every hour of the day herself, still, what is emphatically called a *dead* faint was a spectacle no less strange than shocking to her." In short, we are to understand that whereas a person of sham sensibility only went into minor swoons and hysterics, the person of true refinement was capable at the right moment of a dead faint. The convention was so thoroughly established—or else the physical constitution of the average woman was so weak—that Lady Juliana, even after a lifetime's practice of the accomplishment, positively took the symptoms seriously.

However, she was soon convinced that it was merely a hereditary habit, for on the next morning, when Lady Juliana came down to breakfast, she found sensibility still rampant. As her mother entered, surrounded by pugs, "Again Mary found herself assailed by a variety of powerful emotions. She attempted to rise ; but, pale and agitated, she sank back in her chair. Her agitation was unmarked by her mother." Miss Ferrier records this, let it be observed, as a trait of extreme heartlessness, but a candid observer would merely say that Lady Juliana had learned a good deal of sense. A lady who was in the habit of swooning herself could certainly not encourage it in her daughter. Two such sensibilities would overtax the resources of any household. And besides, the proper person to swoon at (if I may be allowed the expression) was a husband, and Mary had not yet got one.

Other instances of this fine quality of emotion in Miss Ferrier could easily be catalogued. In "Destiny," the work of her mature years, there is a young man whose face turned pale and whose fea-

tures "contracted, as if in agony," when he kissed the hand of the *fiancée* whom he intended to throw over. That was apparently the masculine equivalent for swooning. Later on in the story this gentleman, Reginald, finds himself in a boat on a Scotch loch with both the ladies who have claims upon him. A squall gets up. Edith, the virtuous heroine, is comparatively unmoved; but Lady Waldegrave, the unauthorised object of Reginald's affections, is overcome. She was not sea-sick, as she undoubtedly would have been—or, at least, her lover did not put that very natural construction upon the facts when, according to the usual formula, she "sunk back, to all appearance lifeless," but, as was expected of the soft-hearted men of that day, immediately assumed that she was either dead or dying. He was moved by this belief to a display of demonstrative passion which did not, indeed, upset the boat, as it might well have done, but entirely upset poor Edith, who, being a real heroine, went into a real faint directly she touched the shore. Mrs. Malcolm, who received her, produced from the

usual pocket the usual remedies, but, as usual, in vain, till a decent interval had elapsed. The duration of a real heroine's fainting fit cannot be estimated at less than a quarter of an hour.

These instances appear to me sufficient to prove that temporary loss of consciousness was an ordinary incident in the life of a well-bred female. The malady was confined to the upper classes, though it was imitated, as was natural, by ladies' maids. The severity of the attacks would appear, from Miss Ferrier, to have been proportioned to the moral worth of the character. Less estimable persons fainted oftener, but not so thoroughly. Even Miss Austen, who does not deal in the romantic, heroic, or picturesque, gives to this fact in the female constitution a considerable prominence. And it can hardly be denied that this defect or this virtue has been almost entirely eliminated. An interesting series of statistics might be compiled from the novels of this century to show the dwindling number of faints or hysterical fits per volume in books written by ladies; or it might be expanded to display the

various manners in which ladies may exhibit emotion. The extreme point in the other direction is reached when the heroine does not shriek and swoon, but swears a little and calls for whiskey and soda to pull herself together. This type of heroine we have not quite reached yet, though George Egerton has approached it in some of her works, and, indeed, Mrs. Hodgson Burnett, in her "Lady of Quality," throws the ideal to which this age tends (as writers have always been prone to do) back into a preceding century. The reaction from the swooning period began a good while ago; except by some such examination of contemporary fiction as I have suggested, it would be difficult to fix the date. Of course one has to limit the inquiry to the work of lady novelists. Men very naturally upheld the clinging ivy conception of womanhood so long as it was possible. Thackeray and Dickens luxuriated in it; and even in Trollope, though his natural pugnacity inclined him to admire young ladies like Mary Thorne, well able to take their own part and confront boldly man or even woman,

there are frequent hints of the same feminine charm. It was, I think, the Brontës who headed the revolt; and they were really and unmistakably pioneers. They preached to their sex that a woman, even if she had the acutest sensibilities, had also the power to control them; and there never was more merciless invective heaped upon any vice than the authoress of "Villette" lavished upon feminine affectations. The Brontës had the excess which is native to intellectual pioneers. The type of woman whom they presented—a frail, spiritual creature, perfectly ready to hammer a growling bulldog into submission, as Emily Brontë herself is once reported to have done—was not for everyone's imitation. But they brought fortitude into fashion, and they set the example of a hearty contempt for silly weakness. Nerves and the vapours became associated with school-girls. A brilliant novel of Mrs. Oliphant's, "Miss Marjoribanks," written about 1866, marks definitely the turn of the tide. When Mrs. Marjoribanks died, "her daughter was only fifteen, and had floods of tears at her command, as was

only natural at that age." But already she had impressed upon her mind, beside the ideal of sensibility, an ideal of self-control. "Miss Marjoribanks sketched to herself, as she lay back in the corner of the railway carriage" (on her way home) "with her veil down, how she would wind herself up to the duty of presiding at her papa's dinner parties and charming everybody by her good humour and brightness and devotion to his comfort; and how, when it was all over, she would withdraw and cry her eyes out in her own room, and be found in the morning languid and worn out, but always heroical, ready to go downstairs and assist at dear papa's breakfast and keep up her smiles for him till he had gone out to his patients." Lucilla was then extremely young—that is what Mrs. Oliphant wishes to impress upon us—but a young lady fully bent upon playing a leading part. That she had fixed upon a part superannuated and frankly ridiculous was only part of the comedy of youth and inexperience. Lucilla was destined to develop into a mistress of social strategy; but for the moment

her zeal was not according to knowledge, and her conception of feminine attributes and ideals was school-girlish and constructed from old-fashioned novels. And so when Dr. Marjoribanks, poor man, returned from his wife's funeral, possessed with "a painful weariness" as he realised "how little real sorrow was in his mind," his daughter greeted him with a flood of tears and a protestation that she would be a comfort to him if he would let her. I cannot refrain from quoting the delightful passage :

"This address, which was utterly unexpected, drove Dr. Marjoribanks to despair. He said, 'Get up, Lucilla,' but the devoted daughter knew better than to get up. She hid her face in her hands, and rested her hands upon her mother's sofa, where the doctor was sitting; and the sobs of that emotion which she meant to control henceforward, echoed through the room. 'It is only for this once—I can—cannot help it,' she cried. When her father found that he could neither soothe her nor succeed in raising her, he got up himself, which was the only thing left to him, and began to walk

about the room with hasty steps. Her mother, too, had possessed this dangerous faculty of tears, and it was not wonderful if the sober-minded doctor, roused for the first time to consider his little girl as a creature possessed of individual character, should recognise with a thrill of dismay the appearance of the same qualities which had wearied his life and brought his youthful affections to an untimely end. Lucilla was, it is true, as different from her mother as summer from winter; but Dr. Marjoribanks had no means of knowing that his daughter was only doing her duty by him in his widowhood, according to a programme of filial devotion resolved upon, in accordance with the best models, some days before."

Oh, these traitresses to their sex! For centuries male philosophers and satirists had moralised, declaimed, and railed upon the nerves, the vapours, the spleen, and all the other host of feminine weaknesses; but they had never roused mankind to shake off "the tyranny of tears," nor convinced mankind's natural opponent that in the moments of her acutest sensibility she might look a fool.

On the contrary, man, as man always will do, taking woman at her own valuation, had held upon the whole that these soft emotions proved irrefragably a kind of kinship with the angels, and there were few indeed who held Swift's opinion that the woman to be admired was one like Stella, who never screamed when she got into a ferryboat. And so the interesting creatures swooned, and screamed, and wept, and sobbed from generation to generation, harrowing the hearts of their lovers and reducing their husbands to despair. It was only when woman herself took up the pen, and began basely to open men's eyes to a sense of the ludicrous in this particular situation, that all these tender susceptibilities shrivelled like a maidenhair fern exposed to an east wind, and man began to revise his position. The generation to which Dr. Marjoribanks belonged had patiently endured, or fretted with scanty resignation under this same 'tyranny of tears'; but now man suddenly discovered that he had allies in the other camp. There were women who sympathised with man's sufferings under the tyranny of

tears and the despotism of hysteria; there were women who, when a lady swooned in public, were ready to dash cold water over her best bib and tucker; and man profited by their example. Woman, that acute strategist, realised that her flank was turned and shifted her ground; only a few belated stragglers still fight with the old weapons and upon the old lines. Since then there has been a good deal of manœuvring; the positions of the opposing camps is not well defined. Woman, no longer panoplied in weakness, has upon occasions assumed armour of brass, but on the whole she finds it does not suit her. In her new development she is still somewhat in the experimental stage; she has made mistakes, and man has not been grateful to her for the advantage which these mistakes have offered to him in the duel of the sexes. For, as we all know very well in our hearts even on a bicycle woman is and ought to be our ruler; and we submit meekly to be governed, and console ourselves by reflecting that if there be any truth in records she is a much less inconvenient person

to have to do with since the decay and downfall of sensibility.

NOTE.—When this essay was first published, it drew upon the head of its author a great deal of indignation. I was accused of *lèse-majesté* towards the memory of Miss Austen; and further, it was argued that the greater sensibility which I attributed to our great grandmothers had no real existence; in short, that ladies did not swoon in fact but only in fiction. Now, concerning the first of these charges, I would merely defend myself by assenting with all my heart to every word of Charlotte Brontë's eloquent criticism of her great predecessor, which concludes with this sentence :

“Jane Austen was a complete and very sensible lady; she was a very incomplete and most insensible woman.”

Upon the other point, I would produce the unsolicited testimony of a lady whom I have never seen, but who sent a message to me to say that I was perfectly right. In her young days of course

she swooned, and so did her friends. But they never swooned unless there was a man present. The reason that ladies nowadays did not faint was not that they could not nor that they would not, but simply that the man of the period would offer them neither comfort nor assistance. The decay of sensibility in women, on her view, was caused by the decline in manners of men.

DAISY PICKERS

SPRING has come, they say, when a maid can set her foot on three daisies at once. Some put it even at seven. But three or seven, a maid with any maidenly-sized foot would find it hard enough to verify spring's presence in Kensington Gardens or Hyde Park. It is not that the grass there does not yield daisies like any other grass, but that there is such a multitude of eager eyes and fingers on the look-out for anything that can be called a flower. I realized this as I was sitting in the gardens one sunny Sunday with a couple of very small boys. We were on a path down by the Serpentine, and between us and the water was a narrow strip of closely-cut grass, protected by a railing. Something beyond the railing interested the two urchins ; but I was paying no attention to them. However, they were

obviously in debate. Then one of them came up to me and asked : "Are those the keeper's daisies? He says I mustn't pick them," He (Freddy, let us say) had obviously attempted on some other day to pick other flowers, and been threatened with the official terrors ; so now, after the fashion of infancy, he was determined to get some value out of the prohibition, by playing dragon to his younger brother. However, we agreed that the park-keeper would not mind much about daisies, and back they ran to the railings. It really was pathetic enough. All along the curve was a pretty thick sprinkling of the little white blossoms, with their yellow hearts looking up at the sky ; but for about a foot and a half inward from the edge—the stretch of a baby arm—not a daisy to be seen. My pair, being active and determined, managed to get four or five rather scrubby specimens by dint of squatting and grovelling on the path, till the boy who had only got one sternly rebuked the more fortunate brother for spoiling Sunday breeches in the mud. But in the meanwhile the word had gone

out that there were daisies to be had, and two or three other groups were busy along the line of railing, stretching out unavailing hands in this new torture of Tantalus.

London children live in some ways a more exciting life than their country cousins. There is a great and pleasing variety of sights, soldiers of different kinds, many dogs, all the incidents of the streets, and the Round Pond, where they can sail boats or watch the miniature yachts racing, and grow exceedingly learned over rigs and hulls. But upon the whole there is no comparison between town and country, at all events for a boy. He may see less in the country, but he can do more. In the country he does not see half so many flowers as the parks have to show, but there is no park-keeper with a watchful eye even on the daisies. The boy in the country can follow the instincts of nature, and, in the matter of flowers, they lead to appropriation. If one cares for plant life, it is rather distressing to see the poor pretty things snapped off, with an impossibly short stalk, and

carried about in a hot, pudgy hand; almost certainly to be thrown down after a little while, and left to wither.

Still, it is a questionable sensibility that would forbid children to pick flowers. There are few more innocent pleasures in the world, and few keener delights given to an infant. Children value these spoils chiefly as trophies, and not so much for their beauty of colour or form. But whatever they value them for, they value them intensely; that is why one feels a touch of pity even for well-dressed urchins who have to contemplate inaccessible daisies through an iron railing.

NIGHTFALL IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

WE had strolled into the Gardens after dinner to smoke a cigarette by the Round Pond. It was a dead, still evening, at the end of a flaming day of sunshine ; a big, silly, lop-sided moon was getting up over South Kensington, the veil of smoke making her look quite close at hand and conventional ; no radiant divinity, but a decorative accessory not very well put in. Suddenly I noticed at the east end of the pond a sheep coming to the water's edge to drink. Immediately one began to think of Mr. Kipling's Jungle Book, the Water-truce, and what not, and the scene was transfigured. One forgot the orange-peel under the seats, and the squalid remnants of paper bags floating indecorously in the water, limp and disreputable as suicides. We moved quietly down to where the flock was nervously following its leader, as sheep will do ; and we be-

came aware that all the avenues of trees were full of these ashen grey forms, trooping up noiselessly, like phantoms, to their drinking place, impatient for the moment when all these intrusive humans should be gone. We sat down on one of the benches by the water. Bats flitted overhead; ducks, wheeling round and round the pond, and calling on the wing as all fowl do after dusk, silhouetted their stretched necks against the yellowish western sky. Presently there came a soft patter beside us, and, one after another, five or six sheep popped over the low railing and came to the edge to drink. There was so much wild nature in the spectacle, that the stone margin seemed curiously incongruous; by the Serpentine, among the yellow flag iris, they would have seemed more in place. All were newly clipped, of course; I had seen the process a few days before, in a pen in the Gardens, where the grimy fleeces were stripped off, leaving, not the downy white that one looks for, but a close-cropped hide impregnated to the very skin with a filtration of soot. Now, however, they

took the soft tones of twilight as they drank. not deeply, but sipping, as if they did not care for this water, which must reek of cockneydom. Perhaps, however, it was a natural nervousness; for nine had not struck yet, and a sophisticated little fox terrier, more Cockney than any street Arab, made a dash along the walk, disturbing the quiet drinkers, and gleefully dissipating a colony of ducks who had tucked themselves up for the night on the water's edge. But still the grey multitudes came trooping in, thicker and thicker, through the trees; and when the park-keepers' cry "All out!" came across the water, they were assembled, like soldiers, waiting round three sides of the pond. We walked back slowly towards Kensington Palace. The green of the great elm masses was still distinguishable, and reflected itself a tone fainter in the water. Beyond its shadow the pond was a dead silvery colour, except where the wake of a swimming duck caught the moonlight with a flash too bright to be silver. The open avenues leading eastwards held a bluish haze. One tiny boat made a speck of

white on the water, becalmed hopelessly beyond reach of its lawful owners : there was an anxious heart in some nursery that night. Just in front of Kensington Palace was a stray duck, separated from the congregation, and caring for one most diminutive duckling (can there have been anything wrong about its parentage?). The mother was quacking to it in a very human way, telling it to stop play and go to bed ; but it persisted in making absurd little runs on the water, and when it got on to *terra firma*, made still more absurd jumps into the air after presumable flies. Last impression of all, as we walked back along the Broad Walk, positively a strong scent of hay met us. Talk about Mr. Pinero and *The Squire* ! This was the real thing. And sure enough there was a field of hay, raked over and drying, between the limit of the trees and back of Kensington Palace Gardens, exhaling delightful odours, that made us sigh for the country. Probably, however, the town-bred nursery-maids and their charges will be simply devastated with hay fever, caught in Kensington Gardens.

A THEORY OF TALK

NOWADAYS the arts of life have many prophets among us. Newspapers, magazines, and books pour upon us floods of suggestions: what we should think, what we should drink, what we should eat, how we should be clothed, how we should grow rich, and what we should do with our money; I remember even a successful dissertation upon the art of breathing. But, curiously enough, upon the most important of all life's arts, the most envied and most enviable of all accomplishments, our monitors are generally silent. They do not instruct us how we should talk, or what we should talk about. At the very most they claim to supply topics for conversation; though they are more often fruitful in the very subjects which conversation ought to avoid. Of course, there are exceptions to this general silence; some brilliant,

like Stevenson, some the reverse, like Professor Mahaffy, a good talker who has written a very indifferent "Art of Conversation." Stevenson's admirable essay is, for him, curiously devoid of practical precepts; other books—for instance, a recently published "Art of Conversing" signed in the most inviting way by "a Member of the Aristocracy"—lapse into mere manuals of behaviour. But, avoiding any suggestion of academic principles or conventional rules, and considering talk as it exists between people who have some usage of life, who have experiences to compare, and are not afraid of their own voices, it should be possible to set down a few reflections, which might afford to the average reader at least the pleasure of having somebody to differ with; and that is very often what we seek, not merely in books, but in human society.

Do you remember the reason—one of La Rochefoucauld's prettiest discoveries—why lovers never bore each other? It is because they always talk about themselves. We cannot all be lovers—perhaps we do not want to be; but

we all want to avoid being bores or bored, and here is pointed out the way of salvation. One might almost lay it down in a series of aphorisms. But, first of all, we must evidently dismiss, banish, hiss off, and utterly explode the old precept, instilled into our childhood, that it was very bad manners and very wearisome to talk about ourselves. If you are being bored yourself, you are probably boring the other person. In other words, in order to talk well, you must be interested in what you are talking of; and everybody who is interested in anything is interested in himself or herself. It is therefore much better to talk boldly and undisguisedly about yourself than to make talk on an indifferent subject. In the former case you run a risk; in the latter you are certain to achieve nothing but dulness. To talk about one's self is all very well when the listener is content to be a listener; and the world is happily full of persons who desire to be talked to, rather than to talk. But your listener may have competing ambitions; in which case you will come under the definition given by a witty

professor. "I mean by a bore," he said, "some one who insists upon talking about himself when I want to talk about myself."

Of course, one is using the word "self" in its widest application: a man, his whole interests and experiences; a woman and her dress. A man's self resides principally in his work or his play; if he talks of himself, it means generally that he tells you of his career in the House of Commons, or of his big days on a Scotch lough. A woman's existence is far more centred in her emotions, and you cannot well talk to her—not, at least, without some danger—about these; but dress is the means which has been allotted to her for the expression of her charming personality—she dresses to illustrate the conception which she has of herself. In many cases her choice of a gown reflects a mood. If you know why a particular woman wears a particular dress on a given occasion, you know a good deal about her. The knowledge may be embarrassing, because there are many dresses which testify to an expectation of being bored; but it is always inte-

resting knowledge. There are, of course, plenty of women to whom the problem of how to dress is just what it seems to the average man—an effort to clothe oneself in a way that will not excite remark. But these women are either absolutely dull, devoid of that vivid interest in life which makes a person agreeable to be with, or else they are preoccupied with something else, and project the self in another direction. In the latter case, talk, if it be wisely guided, will fly from all question of colours, and soft or severe draperies, to seek the genuine aspirations and the central thoughts of the pair engaged in talk.

All this applies only to talk between two people; but more than half of conversation is conducted *tête-à-tête*, and that portion includes ninety-nine hundredths of all the interesting talk that one hears. Even when talk in general has been excellent, when one carries away from it a permanent impression, it is, as a rule, because some one dominant individual has displayed his personality before the assembly. One has seen a man do this, airing his qualities like a peacock, magni-

ficently self-conscious, unchallengeable in the prestige of his splendour. Even a man can sometimes do it, and how much oftener a woman! But for the ordinary individual, who does not seek to dazzle a circle, it is enough to concentrate one attention at the time; and to do that, you must talk of something that touches you so closely as to be really part of yourself.

Let us lay it down, then, that in talk, if you wish to interest, you must talk of yourself; if you wish to be interested, you must get other people to talk of themselves. In conversation there is always a give and take. Some prefer to give and some to take; but give, as well as take, there must always be on both sides. You must make some return if you wish to play the listener; in exchange for the personality which the talker imparts, you must be ready to impart some of your own. Talk is not in most cases an exchange of ideas, still less—Heaven defend us—of facts; it is really an interchange of sympathies.

Suppose an average intelligent man and woman in an average drawing-room,

either drawn by mutual attraction or compelled by superior mandate to converse to one another, how are they to pass their time agreeably? The first requisite, one may observe, is a mechanical one, and too often not forthcoming. There can be no conversation between persons who are not approximately on the same level; the problem, how a man standing is to discourse pleasantly with a woman seated in a low arm-chair, has, by innumerable and painful trials, been proved insoluble. He acquires a pain in his back; she, a crick in her neck; such is the upshot of that interview. But let us assume that both are standing, or that Providence is exceptionally kind and two seats are available; suppose also that they have a charitable host or hostess, who will allow a guest to fulfil Dr. Johnson's aspiration "to fold his legs and have his talk out;" what is the recipe for an agreeable conversation? Are these two people, who have no particular information upon politics, to discuss the probable action of Germany? in other words, to collate their recollection of two or three leading articles?

If you have the honour of discoursing to an influential editor, by all means draw him on European questions; they are part of himself, the product which it is his duty and his privilege to manufacture; but the rest of the world, according to their intelligence, see in these subjects merely an occasion to conceal or to parade their ignorance.

What is true of politics is true of all other special knowledge. Whether you wish to talk or to be talked to, subjects which do not affect the personal existence of the talkers should be avoided. People who know each other well do not need ingenuity in choice of topics; but very little ingenuity is needed even between strangers to keep upon something which has a possible bearing on yourselves. It is always safe, however slight the acquaintance, to talk to a man of what he has done, or to a woman of what she is going to do. There are certain things which touch every human being nearly. Old age is one of them; and that, like most of the others, is very nearly certain to lead to the eternal and eternally fascinating subject of sex.

But it is impossible to lay down rules *in vacuo* ; everything must be left to the individual discretion, or rather to the joint discretion—especially the moment when to be indiscreet. You must know, by a set of invisible feelers stretched out after the impalpable, when is the moment to advance a little in intimacy—which are the people who like to confide, and which like to be confided in. Most men and most women are flattered if somebody who has a sympathetic manner tells them one of the little things which the hearer feels would not be told just to all the world ; and many men and many women enjoy nothing more than to talk intimately about themselves to some one who will never laugh at the wrong moment, and will understand what is only half said. Except when absolute perfect understanding is established—and how often is understanding perfect and absolute, even between husband and wife?—there is always, in any talk that is not merely from the lips outward, this groping after the unexplored—this probing into the recesses of another consciousness.

Talk between people who meet for

the first time, or who talk together for the first time, has an exciting quality which gradually evaporates. Each sets out on a voyage of discovery in a new country ; the voyage has the charm of the unfamiliar, if only by making one display a new aspect of oneself. The long fireside talks between intimates, the endless conversation of a day's walk with your friend, are like the hills or fields where you were born : good to look forward to, good to look back on, renewing your life from its sources ; but the mind is never excited by them, it is not stamped with the crispness of new impressions. Yet between man and woman the freshness of life never wholly wears off ; the unforeseen is always opening up in new vistas. "What? is that how it looks to you? To all women?" "Oh, the strange thing to be a man and not understand these things!"

The really good talker is the person who pursues with most avidity this continual exploration ; who is equally ready to give or take, and is always intolerant of the dull and insignificant ; who insists upon talking only of realities ; who is

able to bring any topic into vital relation with the people talking, or, in default of that, to slide into some topic where interest is possible for both. The essence of the thing is sympathy and a quick responsiveness ; a keen zest in the business of finding out what other people are like, and how the world looks to them ; and that instinctive sense of individual human differences, which enables the talker to divine what will interest a particular associate. For the good talker does not converse with words only ; he sees when the eye grows dull and when it brightens ; he follows all the subtle indications. "*He*," one says for convenience ; but in this matter women are best ; the best listeners, and the best to lead the talk into the right channel. A man is too apt to talk to any one person—especially in talking to men—as he would to any other ; not to let the personality of others affect his talk. There are men even who talk to women just as they would to men. There are also women who say that they like men to talk to them as if they were men ; but they do not really like it. Naturally they like to

be talked to as reasonable beings, not as inferiors in intellect ; but they are not men, and they should not be talked to as men. The perfection of talk is always between man and woman, for each has got a point of view which is unattainable to the other, and must, therefore, be permanently interesting. Every man must wonder what it feels like to be a woman ; every woman must wonder how things strike a man. More than this, upon the inherent attraction between the sexes is based the whole ceremonial of courteous homage which should somehow make its presence felt in every word that a man says to a woman—and this ceremonial none but the barbarous would wish to destroy. To mark it, without emphasising it, in talk is a real art ; indeed, all fine shades that go to make up good manners have their counterpart in conversation. It is not easy for a young man to hit the precise tone of talk with his elders and betters. To be cavalier with them is detestable ; yet one should know how to suggest deference without appearing to treat them as old fogies.

The excellence of talk is relative—

what would be very good talk in the small hours is very bad talk over afternoon tea. As a general rule, nobody should venture on theology before midnight; after that hour, for some occult reason, one is apt to drift towards it. The afternoon is essentially a frivolous period, when work is done and we unbend before bracing ourselves again to the task of dinner. Of course, one is not talking of the afternoon as it appears to ladies who have a round of visits to accomplish. For them the great dictum of Miss Deborah in "Cranford" still holds good: "Never let your visit exceed a quarter of an hour, my dear!" "But, Miss Deborah, what if I should grow interested in the conversation, and forget to go away?" "Never talk of anything, my dear, that could tempt you to forget the quarter of an hour." People who come with a fixed determination to go away at a certain moment cannot possibly talk; they can make conversation, and unhappily they do; the vicious habit has depraved their whole sex. There is no reason in Nature why women should be less amusing than men; but the infe-

riority is obvious. Take the simplest instance. Thirty or forty men will meet at seven o'clock, dine together, and pass the evening very agreeably till midnight. Everybody likes to be asked to such functions. Imagine thirty or forty women called upon to do the same ; would they be able to amuse themselves ? If they would, why do they not do it ? Catechise a frank lady upon the half-hour after dinner, while the men are over their cigarettes ; she will tell you that nearly always it is a period of watching and waiting. The fact is, that the vice of talking to make talk, rather than to interest or be interested, has entered into their very souls, and only the careful and intelligent among them eradicate the taint. Women have learnt to be talked to, but not to originate talk. They have been taught by their mothers from childhood that they must never talk about themselves ; that discretion is the better part of conversation ; and that the one thing essential is to be insignificant, because, if you mean nothing, you never will be misunderstood ; whereas if you get into the habit of exciting yourself

over talk, you may hurt somebody's feelings or shock somebody's nerves, and you may not remember to go away at the end of twenty minutes. All this formality is simply fatal to talk; because, in order to talk so that you will interest, or in order to show that you are interested, you must produce something of your own personality; you must prove that the thing has a personal bearing for you.

Another form of nonsense carefully instilled into the mind of youth is the precept that one should not talk about persons. This engaging maxim assumes that to talk of one's friends means talking scandal about them. Happily no warning is more universally disregarded; but why give the warning? Why not say rather, "By all means talk about people, but talk about them intelligently and charitably?" What on earth should men and women talk about, if not men and women? The proper study of mankind is man; his more delightful, if less proper, study is woman; and one may perhaps assume the converse to hold good. Nobody wants to confine talk to

personalities ; it is quite reasonable to talk of abstract subjects, not persons, if they interest you more ; they will then be part of yourself. But, above all, be interested, and you will be interesting ; only keep an eye on the other person, and know when to stop. The most blessed gift in conversation is the power to be interested ; but if you cannot contrive to be interested in what is being talked of, then either go away or else try to put life into things by talking of something that interests you. The true genius is the person who, while giving, seems all the while to take ; who can make a man feel not merely that he has been amused, but that he has been amusing. A good laugh often contributes largely to this consummation ; there is no possession more to be desired for a young man than a good laugh ; not necessarily a loud laugh, but simply the power of showing that he is amused. The muscles of the face and the eyes can do it silently ; but if there can be added to them also an agreeable noise, that is infinitely the better. Practically, an agreeable laugh is the best sign of

good health and good spirits, and it communicates its tonic quality to everyone within earshot, even if they have not the sympathetic exhilaration of the joke. But if a good laugh is a treasure, a bad laugh is a curse. It is the most complete expression of vulgarity attainable by the human organs; and even when it is not vulgar it is irritating. A nervous laugh is almost worse than a twitch in the face; and a man who laughs before his joke ought really to undergo a course in the rhetoric of conversation.

That agreeable art has its professors, but we can only—by reason of our vanity—go to school to them when we are young. Women hold nearly all the chairs in this faculty; and, though they are faulty professors for their own sex—chiefly inculcating the odious quality of caution—they are simply invaluable to ours. No one has ever sufficiently praised the labours of the young woman of eight-and-twenty who has a mission for breaking-in boys. She encourages them to talk to her on the one subject about which they have something to say

—themselves ; she teaches them how to say it nicely, with a pretty deference to her approbation ; and she is in a position to rebuke them when they bore her. That is a rebuke which between equals cannot be administered, nor even suggested. No man has ever forgiven any woman for saying that he bored her, unless she recanted with all possible proofs of repentance. A woman will forgive anything ; but this is perhaps the one insult which she can never by any possibility forget.

Nobody can teach a bad talker to be a good one, but he can by attention learn to be less bad, and in his youth the kindness of such professors as we spoke of may do much to correct natural defects. The artist in conversation, like every other artist, is both born and made ; an innate instinct—which is really a vital interest in things and persons—is cultivated in him to its appropriate use. Like Falstaff, he is not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others. An intelligent man, even a man of genius, may from shyness or defective sympathy be a bad talker ; but put him into the hands

of a good talker, and he will be made to talk well—his personality will be extracted. No matter how bodiless and sapless may be the material in which he works—even if he is a mathematician or a bimetallist—tact will draw out the human appeal in his lifelong energies and conquests. Nothing enlarges the sympathies like education ; so the good talker must of necessity have a good, all-round education. But it is needless to say that the people who talk best are not those of the most recondite acquirements ; observation, not book-lore, is the making of a good companion for all companies and all weathers.

The problem of every hostess—whom to bring together—is in itself a problem in talk. The genius in hospitality not only knows instinctively what is the connecting link of sympathy—the key to strike—between herself and a given person, but which are the people between whom such links will readily establish themselves. If she has complete confidence in the result, she will leave to her guests the entire pleasure of the voyage of discovery ; if she is apprehensive, she

will put them a step or two on the way by indicating some interest which she knows is common to them; and perhaps this is the safer method. If she wants general talk, and not people conversing in groups or couples, she will certainly have some one whom she can rely on—a man or a woman with a stimulating character and high animal spirits. One of the best qualities in such a stand-by is the propensity to trail his coat. A good fighter—one who will give and receive hard knocks with pleasure—is invaluable; witness the strange case of Dr. Johnson, who, with everything on earth to make him intolerable, became the most successful of all talkers on the grand scale—not so much by the adroitness of his blows, as by his sheer delight in battle. Johnson never seems to have acted as a check to talk; one of the most intolerable contemporary types is the man who lies in wait to say something that will sting. In the heat of discussion nobody feels a blow from a rival combatant; it is the sudden stone from a silent outsider which causes resentment. But the whole case is admi-

rably discussed by Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson, in the *Egoist*, apropos of the dinner which Sir Willoughby spoilt.

Conversation has its propitious hours, and it answers sympathetically to the moment. Women, one fancies, are best company for each other when they sit up and brush their hair together far into the night; for men—certainly for young men—the hours of pipe and whiskey, from eleven indefinitely onwards, are the hours that one looks back upon with a fond regret. We may not have been very wonderful people when we were at college, but what good company we were for one another! In those days, too, breakfast was a meal one could loaf over and the morning an agreeable vacancy; but after college days who cares—who dares—to talk over breakfast? It is a thing to be gone through resolutely, or to be scrambled through, as the case may be; but in any case eloquence or sympathy is not in season. “I should like to marry a man who would be fascinating at breakfast,” said a young lady. “My dear,” replied her mentor, “be thankful if he is decently civil.” In sum-

mer and the sunshine out of doors one does not talk ; one is too busy existing. The ideal moment is by the fireside, before lamps are lighted, when the red glow is on faces, and men lie back in their armchairs, and women pull up close to the fender and draw their skirts tight over their knees. Then you get the sort of conversation in which you can afford to be silent, leaving the fire to fill up pauses ; and when all is considered, that is the best talk of all.

THE SENSE OF HUMOUR

THE sense of humour is not a virtue ; it is not even one of those qualities which are essential to our conception of a gentleman ; but it is an attribute which no man of our race will own himself to lack. Women are by no means so anxious to pretend to it, perhaps because men are by no means clear that it is an excellent thing in woman. Thackeray liked Amelia none the less for lacking, and Becky none the better for possessing, a keen sense of humour. But all men are inclined to regard its absence in themselves as an imperfection that cannot be glozed over or turned into an heroic defect. A man may admit bad temper and expect you to construe the fault into fine manly spirit ; he will own to selfishness and look to be admired for knowledge of the world or an indomitable purpose ; but he will as soon confess to

cowardice as own to being without this particular quality of mind. Old Mr. Osborne, in *Vanity Fair*, who may stand excellently for a type of the Briton so convinced of his own value to the world that he dispenses himself readily from all need to be agreeable, could nevertheless be vastly facetious upon occasion, and in all probability prided himself upon his eye for a joke. Yet as a matter of fact the sense of humour is apt to militate against all those things which Mr. Osborne most esteemed—economy, perseverance, single pursuit of a narrow purpose, and plodding concentration. Many a man has become a pillar of the public-house for no other cause. He is born with that enchanting sense of human incongruities which makes the whole world as good as a play to him; he is never driven into action by the mere tedium of his own thought, but wherever men assemble, wherever the play is played, he sits a delighted spectator. He swims in an atmosphere of laughter and carries it with him, silent laughter it may be, but always felt, so that his company is courted by those who have not in themselves this fountain

of joy ; where he goes he is welcome, and wherever he goes he can be sure of pleasure. The genial influence of strong drink stimulates his perception of oddity, loosens his tongue and the tongues about him, while it saps his more strenuous inclinations. And if in his colder moments he takes himself to task and the ugly noise of duty is in his ears, he can give reason for reason ; that fine sense of proportion which is tickled by the spectacle of the incongruous comes to his aid and he calls in his power of double vision. It is well no doubt to work, he reflects ; but from a larger standpoint, look at the futility of endeavour. What is this insect that he should keep up a pother about the eternal principles, categorical imperatives, and the rest ? Everything in life has its humorous side, and none more so than plain duty. At the end of life there lies perhaps the workhouse ; to be treated as a public benefactor, clothed and fed by the community ; and though perhaps the fate is more honorific than agreeable, yet in a wide world how many are the chances ? To-morrow may never come, why fret about this day ten years ? but there is

always to-day. So, one would suppose, Falstaff may have reasoned; and think what the successful merchant, Mr. Osborne or another, is bound to say of Falstaff. Yet Falstaff's was a life lived in beautiful fulfilment of his ruling passion, the sense of humour.

Consider for a moment the personages in Shakespeare who have this gift or faculty most strongly developed. For the most part they are subalterns in the action; your Mercutios, Benedicks, Jacques, and the rest. Only one has a leading part to play, and the point of Hamlet's action is that he does not act. He cannot suspend his sense of humour, this perpetual perception of disparity between aim and result, and it paralyses will. Romeo, if you like, has a pretty wit; but suppose Romeo had been blessed or cursed with this power of seeing two things together, would he not have reflected that after all he had come very safely out of his love-sickness for Rosaline, and need not despair of existing without Juliet? But happily, youth's hot blood makes the generous impulse imperious, and there is no need for youth to turn and strangle

the laughing inward voice that is suggesting what fools we are to think of suicide because one we love will not answer our letters. It is rather with the grown man that such tendencies are dangerous ; to indulge the sense of humour unduly is a vice of maturity. The best work in the world, its temperance, its justice and its charity, comes from men who have in them this genial monitor teaching them to make allowance for their own frailty and for that of others ; but the world's driving forces are exempt from its action. Mahomet and Luther, with this element added to their characters, might have been better and more lovable men, but they would not have worked far-reaching revolutions. They would have been conscious of the disproportion in their whole attitude towards life. No man with a sense of humour can be a fanatic, for he must always be aware that he does not monopolise the world's light ; and it is the fanatics and the hallucinated who change the face of nations.

In less exalted parts, although this same sense of humour is often a good shield against the tyranny of public

opinion, the less we let it affect our personal conduct the better. It is well to be aware that, whatever we do or leave undone, the world will continue to revolve, and that we are scarcely likely to alter the constitution of mankind. But wise indifference to the judgment of fools, and even the delight in their failure to comprehend us, should not lessen our desire to live on good terms with our own self-respect; and the perception of an odd disparity between men's acts and their reasons for acting ought not to make us deny the need for right action. In the finer shades of conduct it is still more imperative to be on our guard. We need not all be Romeos to kill ourselves for love; but there are many things which a man seems impelled to do for the love of woman, and yet cannot help perceiving that he is three parts of a fool for doing. The fine aspirations, the honourable self-denials which spring inevitably from love, and as inevitably suggest the thought that they are a kind of Quixotism, have to be cherished at all costs. In short, the sense of humour must not be allowed to degenerate into

the sense of ridicule. Ridicule is acrid, thin, and apt to be spiteful ; keen-sighted enough, but essentially seeing only one side, like Lockhart's criticism ; it delights to give pain, whereas humour is always touched with tenderness and can feel even the magnanimity of folly. Wherever there is a point of honour, it is constantly accessible to ridicule, and in our efforts to defend it we rightly throw away humour as an encumbrance. Yet persons whose conduct is not affected by the scruple in question see clearer, and often see with the justice of humour ; there is an odd instance in a debate upon duelling which runs through several of the Browning love-letters, where the man stood manfully for his unreasonable code and the woman, with a fine sense of humour and the most delicate tact, exposed its incongruities. Many a man indeed has had the keenest sense of humour, yet never let it play on what touched him most nearly. Is there any odder figure than Carlyle, perpetually eloquent in eulogy of silence ? Yet the incongruity of his attitude never seems to have presented itself to

him. He had his message to deliver, and he said it in season and out of season, though part of the message was to inculcate upon all other men the duty of holding their tongues.

BUYING AND SELLING

“EVERY man has his price,” said Sir Robert Walpole, and he said it of politicians, who alone among mankind profess to be unpaid. But except for these disinterested persons, one may affirm of the human race that buying and selling enters into almost every action, and is at the root of every occupation. Every man is selling himself for the best price he can command, though we do not express it so when we are civil. We give our services and we receive remuneration, and for the most part we have a genteel contempt for the people who do explicitly buy and sell. Why this should be so is one of the queernesses of human nature,—a puzzle as insoluble as the question why certain forms of buying and selling should rank above others. A man who sells armour-plates looks down on one who makes an equal income by manufacturing cutlery ; and

the man who earns five thousand a year by selling scissors of his own make counts himself better than the retailer who clears seven thousand. Again, to sell raw materials is always accounted more honourable than to sell the manufactured article; a Duke may sell pigs, probably every Duke does, but he can hardly deal in bacon. Practically, the world still holds by the old Roman notion that a great man should only invest his money in land and servants, or in usury on a large scale. Reason has very little to say in the matter. The most respectable form of selling, one would say, is to sell something that you make yourself—as an artist sells a picture or a writer his book—yet this is the form of trade against which most prejudice existed up to a time within living memory. Byron, always hard up, could scarcely be persuaded at first to take money for his writings. Nowadays we are not so squeamish; we sell the crop of our brains, if we have any, as cheerfully as our great-grandfathers sold their votes. But the most respectable people are by general admission those who sell, not wares, but

themselves. Gentlemen whose high character makes them worth a salary; lawyers who give their services, that is, their brains and their professional standing, for a fee; doctors who sell their knowledge to put long names to old ladies' fanciful complaints—all these people reflect with a singular complacency that they are not in trade. Of course, lurking in a remote background, there is some trace of a reasonable basis for our superstitions. A man who owns land, let us say, and finds minerals on it, or finds the ordinary produce more than he and his household can consume, naturally sells what he cannot use and what other people require. There is a difference between him and the man who lives on the margin of two profits, the retailer whose business it is to sell for more what he has bought for less. In the shopman's employment there is no kindly touch of nature; he does not wait upon the great forces of earth and sky; that mysterious tide, the market, is the only ocean by whose fluctuations he is affected. The manufacturer is, beyond question, a good friend to us if he pro-

duces an article which we all want. We pay him no longer for his skill in a craft, but interest on the capital he has sunk and a salary for his supervision. But the middleman is not in favour with humanity ; we forget that the retailer supplies not only capital and supervision, but a knowledge of the market, and even of our own requirements. Women may know what they want when they go into a shop ; half the men one meets do not. They go in and state their requirements, generally in a shamefaced, inarticulate fashion, and the shopman's answer is beautifully explicit and luminous. No doubt when a man does know what he wants, his opinion does not always coincide with the salesman's ; but in the end, with a little perseverance and brutality, it is possible to get, let us say, leather leggings instead of cloth ones ; though till the end of our days, whenever we wear them, there may rankle in us an uncomfortable conviction that leather is all wrong.

There is something of a confession in the way we are apt to look on shopkeeping or buying and selling as a man's

daily business. People who only traffic on occasion feel the strain upon their honesty ; every transaction has a touch of the gamble ; and we can hardly believe that any conscience can resist for ever. Must there not always be a tendency to overpraise the article that will wear out soonest, to foist off the wares on which gain is the greatest or loss imminent ? Imagine dealing in eggs, —things undistinguishable in outward show ; frauds only to be detected in musty experience. Besides, nearly every other kind of worker has a tangible result to show and take pride in,—the gardener his flowers, the parson his congregation, the sailor his vessel, and so forth. The tradesman's result is his turn-over. What he creates is the excess of gains over outgoings. That at least is the view of prejudice ; in point of fact, probably a man may take pleasure in the attractive looks of his shop-window, and the growth of custom, quite apart from the thoughts of his pocket. They are his result, the outcome of his work, the embodiment of his exertions, and that embodiment is the most interesting thing in the world to a

man who likes his work, whether he be a publican or a poet. And in regular business the gambling element is small; demand and supply can be accurately gauged, unless in the case of perishables like fish and flowers, and where the risk is considerable, a large margin of profit is always, though unwillingly, conceded. The more a man is conversant with selling, probably on the whole, he is the less disposed to cheat. It is not legitimate business, nor good business, to take more than a certain percentage of profit. To study the real ethics of buying and selling one has to take the more exceptional cases, where habit does not lay its controlling force on the decisions. Connoisseurship is beset with temptations, and it is hard to lay down rules. It is clearly fair to buy a young man's work at its market value, say, a Rossetti, in the Pre-Raphaelite days, for fifty or a hundred pounds; but to purchase below the known value, say, a Shakespeare quarto from an ignoramus for a crown, is trading beyond reason on another's ignorance. The same considerations apply as in betting. In fair

betting a man buys a chance, but when the chance you sell is no chance at all, and you know it, you are swindling. Betting ethics, which are vague, forbid betting on a certainty; but really the morality of the matter is that a man should get his money's worth in the way of a chance. Still, if it is not fair to trade on another's ignorance, one may profit in reason by one's own knowledge. For instance, a well-known writer picked up in a twopenny barrow at different times the only two known copies of a Shelley pamphlet. The pamphlet was unsigned, and perhaps not another man in the kingdom would have identified the book, so that the purchaser almost created the value of what he purchased. In horse dealing, *caveat emptor* is taken in its widest sense; yet even in buying horses cases may arise where the buyer should not take too good care of himself. No doubt in such bargains, as well as in connoisseur purchases, one has to take into account all the times one is "done," and the professional horse-coper or bric-à-brac dealer makes it his trade to sell not at a fixed price, but at the largest

possible profit, so that the tables may fairly be turned on him.

It is not many of us, indeed, who are exposed to such temptations ; but some people are specially favoured of Mercury ; some are born to buy, some to sell. We have known a lady habitually fleece costermongers in the sale of her fruit and vegetables, yet she herself was constantly buying things for twice their value ; and some people, especially artists with their trained observation, pick up endless bargains, but make a very poor hand of haggling over the sale of a picture. The pleasures of the two acts are very distinct ; that of the buyer is the more generous and imaginative. With many women buying is a passion, and a milliner's shop a place haunted by cravings which, for my own part, I vaguely realise in a fishing-tackle shop. Flies are so pretty in themselves, and such delightful possibilities hang about them ; it is impossible not to buy. *A fortiori*, when the imagination recognises the true employment of a ribbon, the ribbon is not to be resisted. As to the pleasure of selling, it needs a dash of the unex-

pected. A man's salary is taken as a matter of course ; by-profits, say from writing, are exhilarating just in proportion to their rarity ; but for a perfect pleasure commend me to the selling of pigs. Pigs come to you little, they live happy, and look happy, they put an end to thrifty apprehensions of waste, for all overplus goes to them to be sweetly converted into cash ; and one day, by no personal exertion of yours, but by the beneficent dispensation of providence, they go to return no more, golden sovereigns come home instead, and other piglings replace them, with no wear and tear upon the emotions. To sell a horse, a dog, a pet lamb, a cow even, involves a parting ; and we can make no extra charge to indemnify our sensibility. Authors and artists are the only people who can sell their feelings ; half the trade of literature is done in memories and associations ; as Mr. Watson sings regretfully, " We write out all our soul for pence ; Alas, how few ! " Yet trade we must, all of us ; and the best bargains, like the worst, are settled in the coin of kisses.

BACHELOR WOMEN

PEOPLE who have a taste for abstract political speculation ought to read Signor Ferrero's book, "L'Europa Giovane," which is a study of Northern Europe as it appears to an observer who is of Latin race and a disciple of Lombroso. He pays us Anglo-Saxons the compliment of a particular attention; and one of his most amusing chapters is exclusively devoted to what he takes to be our most characteristic product—the emancipated woman. This chapter is entitled "The Third Sex" (*Il Terzo Sesso*), and from the observation of facts as they are, it trends a good deal into the region of prophecy. Marriage is becoming daily more difficult, says Signor Ferrero, owing to a network of obstacles, mostly economical, and, as a consequence, the army of voluntary celibates increases. Now, the presence of any new class in society must ultimately make itself felt; and the

class of bachelors, male and female, is assuming, in his judgment, alarming proportions. Of the two divisions into which that class falls, it is the women who will make themselves felt as a novel force : for obvious reasons, there is not the same difference of character between the bachelor and the married man as between the married woman and the spinster. The increasing preponderance of the spinster in Anglo-Saxon society strikes Signor Ferrero, and fills him with apprehensions of the most formidable nature.

Women, he says, are gradually invading all the fields in which man had formerly no competition ; and the women who are competing belong to a new type—women who have accepted the necessity of single life and who throw into their work all the energy which nature designed to meet the drain of maternity. Renan has somewhere laid it down that the highest intellectual development can only be attained by absolute chastity (in the Roman Catholic sense) ; as if there were a total fund of nervous energy available which may be drawn upon solely for

the intellect, or, as is the common case, both for the intellect and the emotions. (The idea seems absurd, but I am concerned at present merely to state Signor Ferrero's opinion.) Consequently the competitor who now meets man at every turn is a creature like the working bee, in whom the desire to be a wife or a mother has been atrophied, and the driving force of that desire is converted into a feverish hunger for work. Woman will count for more and more in the world; all careers will soon be open to her, for she will knock passionately at every door till she is admitted, and, once she is allowed to compete, this sexless creature, this working bee, has such an advantage in the struggle for life as a man would have who could live without eating. What will be the result? Till quite lately marriage has been the only profession open to a virtuous woman: it has been the one success within her grasp. That view is frankly recognised by women, for to every woman marriage in itself is still accounted a promotion. There may be counterbalancing circumstances, but to be married is in

itself an object of desire and the subject of congratulation. With men the case is the other way. When a man marries, his friends will admit to themselves that there may be or there are compensations; but the position of a single man is in itself envied and applauded, that of a single woman emphatically is not. In England the single woman has always been able to secure a reasonable freedom, and she has never been accounted ridiculous as she still is in Italy, and to some extent in France. But till of late years she has not had a career open to her, as a single woman, except in works of charity, where there is neither the stimulus of competition nor the consequent intoxication of success. Nowadays there is an alternative to matrimony set before every ambitious woman: she has to choose between marriage and a career; and already, says Signor Ferrero, she chooses the career. He illustrates by an example:—

“I knew a family which was composed as follows: the mother, widow of a Cambridge professor, had devoted herself to politics and fought in the front ranks of

the Radical party ; the eldest daughter, unmarried and thirty, was a journalist and lived by herself in a flat, where she received her friends of both sexes ; the second was a professor of history at Girton ; the third had founded a model farm with the purpose of training ladies to earn their livelihood as gardeners ; the fourth had become an artist and was studying sculpture. Not one of these four girls had the least desire to marry, nor troubled herself in the least to captivate a man. They might easily have found husbands, as all were well off, and the two youngest exceptionally good-looking ; but they did not want to ; they said that, as things were, they had more freedom, and that marriage would diminish their liberty and their pleasures in life. They had, in short, devoted themselves to sterility, not from religious motives, but from sheer calculation."

This family is, he admits, an exception ; but it is for all that a type, and will, on his view, be increasingly less exceptional. The desire for marriage is less in itself with woman than with man. *Dans le mariage il y a toujours celui qui*

aime, et celui qui se laisse aimer ; and it is in nine cases out of ten, says Signor Ferrero, the woman *qui se laisse aimer*. Offer her a substitute for marriage, and she will not marry.

“When a woman has thrown herself into a pursuit, knowledge exaggerates her egoism by strengthening her personality ; why should she go in search of a different felicity without the certainty of success when there is already one to hand ? Her life has gradually been absorbed by one pre-occupation ; why risk herself in the vicissitudes of love and a family ? The physical impulse is too weak, and seldom succeeds in leading a young woman away from her books ; her intellectual preoccupation makes it difficult for any feeling of sympathy for a man to grow in her to the pitch of love ; and consequently love is not born and marriage disgusts. English society will probably differentiate itself into two classes with different functions : one, of women designed for the humble duty of preserving the species ; the other of sexless creatures, intelligent, learned, industrious, but barren, living solely by

the brain, with heart and senses petrified. Thus the higher education of women, far from completing man's felicity, and adding a new splendour to the solution of the problem of love, will be a cause of fresh disappointment, bitter conflicts, and worse complications. Already it frequently occurs that a young man wants to marry a pretty young woman, but finds her life taken up with a study of Roman coins, or devoted to a propaganda of universal suffrage. These cases will grow more and more frequent, and man will oftener and oftener have to supplicate hearts of ice for a love which they are no longer capable of feeling."

This is indeed a black look-out. In England, Signor Ferrero says, we may be able to stand it; but imagine if it came to that in Sicily! However, it does not do to take this reasoner quite seriously; let us put his positions into a moderate form. In his opinion the result of woman's increasing emancipation is to give fresh openings for her activities; the alternative of a professional or literary career makes women indifferent or disinclined to marriage; and lastly, this

increasing disinclination will give women more and more the whip-hand of us poor Anglo-Saxons. Are these things so? No one who knows anything of London can shut his eyes to the growth of such a class as Signor Ferrero talks of; everybody must number among his or her acquaintances several ladies who live entirely by themselves and work for their living, just as their brothers might do. It is certainly a new class, and will probably make itself felt in society; but in what way? By an aversion to matrimony? Frankly, one doubts it. Miss Clough, the late principal of Newnham, was not only a conspicuous instance of the woman who makes herself a career, but was a woman whose life-work consisted in turning out these independent young ladies—what one may call bachelor women. Yet in her biography there occur several passages where this very strong and self-supporting lady expresses her desire for marriage—her wish to have someone to lean upon, some one to take decisions for her. But it is undesirable to discuss this matter with reference to definite indi-

viduals, who must either be living or only recently dead; and happily, other documents are not hard to come by. Many of these bachelor women live by literature, and almost without exception they write novels. If one looks at their books, it is not hard to see how the problem of life and the ambitions of celibacy present themselves to the people directly interested in them. I take two recently-published novels, both of them decidedly clever, which study with an obvious familiarity the habits and adventures of the young lady who lives by herself and on the result of her own exertions. One of them is "Among Thorns," by "Noel Ainslie"; the other, by Miss Evelyn Sharp, is called "The Making of a Prig." Noel Ainslie has written another novel, "An Erring Pilgrimage," where the chief character is again a bachelor woman, but to this I only mean to allude in passing. It is an unpleasant tale, and treats of circumstances which cannot fairly be regarded as typical. There is, however, this much in common between all three books: the heroine is a young lady who comes up to London to live by her wits.

Veronica, of the "Erring Pilgrimage," belongs to a well-marked subsection of this class : those who make the endeavour because they have got to. Katharine Austen, Miss Sharp's heroine, exemplifies the more numerous body of those who come away from home because they are bored, or out of sympathy with their surroundings. The army of bachelor women—the modern "legion of St. Ursula"—recruits itself especially from the girls who have been to school or college, and in the process of receiving higher education have acquired a distaste for monotony and a determination "to live their own life." As to Lesbia Meynell, the principal character in "Among Thorns," she is a lady journalist when the story opens, and Noel Ainslie does not make it quite clear whether she had any option but to become one. However, all three have made the choice in good earnest. Katharine has a home still open to her, but she runs her experiment to the verge of starvation, like the two others. And here one notes that, by the showing of these two ladies, the reign of woman is

not yet completely inaugurated. The most useful thing a bachelor woman can find is a man who will help her to get work. All three heroines owe their success to a man. Paul Wilton gets Katharine her first engagement at a school; Lesbia Meynell is taken on the staff of the *Decade* because Wynyard Cuthbert thinks she has sympathetic eyes. Noel Ainslie and Miss Sharp, one perceives, do not paint the working gentlewoman's outlook in rose colour. Lesbia and Katharine are not endowed with genius; they have no preternatural talent for success; plenty of other women in the same position have as good abilities; but these are two of the lucky ones who get a chance and profit by it. What becomes of those who do not get the chance? Their lines certainly do not fall in pleasant places. They lodge, a good many of them, at some such institution as No. 10, Queen's Crescent, Marylebone, which Miss Sharp has described so vividly. This is a home where working gentlewomen, to the number of sixty-three, live together, and its features are very interesting. There is, to begin

with, a prospectus; there is always a prospectus. Then there is a common dining-room, where the inmates—well, they do not dine, but they eat together. The butter is not attractive, so the new-comer is advised to try the treacle “You can’t go far wrong with treacle. The jam’s always suspicious; you find plum-stones in the strawberry,” and so on. There are two reception-rooms upstairs, and there are sleeping-rooms partitioned off by curtains into cubicles. There is also a bath-room, where the inhabitants can bathe in turns—by putting their names down beforehand; the turn comes about once a fortnight; and you clean your own boots. The ladies who live there are typewriters, shorthand clerks, and so forth; they are, most of them, not accurately described as ladies; but if one can believe Miss Sharp, there is a deal of human nature among them, and most of it pleasant. Lesbia Meynell is a rung or two higher up on the ladder than Katharine. She has rooms at No. 2, Carados Street, Bloomsbury, which, as the landlady’s pretty daughter Peggy observes, is a halfway house where no

one stays long. Lodgers go up, or they go down but they do not remain at the level of Carados Street. Lesbia Meynell has enough to eat and drink, but she is never asked to people's houses; like Katharine, she visits nowhere; and she has no occasion to wear the evening frocks, in which she is aware that she always looks her best. Like Katharine, she is consumed with a desire for pleasure, and the only people of her acquaintance to whom the pleasures come get them from man. This way of life, whether for good or bad, does away with censoriousness. Lesbia meets at the office of the *Décadé* ladies with either a past or a present; the pretty Peggy comes in with her eyes shining to tell how one of the lodgers has taken her to a restaurant and a music-hall. As for Katharine, she also lives among young women who only find a break in their bread-and-butter existence when someone takes them to dinner, and they do not all profess to be rigorous. Katharine herself finds the bright spots of life consist in the hours which she spends with one or other of her two adorers. Man, you see, still

counts, even with the emancipated woman. Both Katharine and Lesbia are lavishly provided for in the matter of lovers; each has two—one simple and straightforward, who loves *pour le bon motif*; one worldly wise and subtle, who is chiefly bent on amusing himself. Needless to say, each of the girls loves the less deserving man; but the main point is that each of them is in love. The attraction of the bachelor existence, which is great—for in spite of its privations, neither Lesbia nor Katharine would go back to stay-at-home ways—lies, no doubt, partly in the interest of work: Katharine is a born teacher who has found her vocation, Lesbia experiences the usual triumph of the lady journalist who gets into print. But the principal charm of their life is the intercourse with the other sex on terms which, under the old rules, would have been entirely impossible. Jack Graham, the artist, who also lodges at No. 2, Carados Street, comes in to smoke cigarettes with Lesbia in her rooms; Wynyard Cuthbert, the wicked hero, calls on her at nine o'clock. Katharine frequently visits Paul Wilton in

his chambers at the Temple, and only objects to the concealment which he, as a man of the world, insists on keeping up. It is perfectly right for you and me, she insists; and he has to admit that it is, for she is the sort of young woman who is safe anywhere, even with the not too scrupulous man whom she loves. Then, says Katharine, if it is right, why conceal it? That is the logic of Bohemia, where everybody does things because they seem pleasant or right to do, not because society has decreed that they are right or pleasant. Paul Wilton declines to be convinced, but Katharine holds to it that the bachelor woman may do whatever is not immoral.

Everybody who knows the society which Noel Ainslie and Miss Sharp are describing, will recognise that these facts are a faithful transcript, indeed now grown so common as to be hardly noticeable. What a change in a quarter of a century! But it is equally clear that this is something very unlike the state of things which Signor Ferrero predicts so ruefully. Man plays a much

more important part in the life of these ladies than he used to do in that of their mothers. They depend on him very largely for their success in life, very largely for their pleasures, and he counts among their friends without any nonsense of Platonism. Katharine is quite honestly friends with Ted, the nice boy, who is the foil to Paul Wilton. One notices also that what appeals to them about man is particularly his masterfulness. Any of them would certainly have endorsed the pronouncement of a charming lady who is no longer a bachelor. She described the amusements of her bachelor life and the interests of an artistic career with such zest that one naturally asked if it had not been a sacrifice to give it up. "Ah, but you get so bored with it," she said; "you do so want some one to tell you not to do things." This, perhaps, is an aspect of man which appeals to woman most strongly before marriage; and, in point of fact, both Lesbia and Katharine adore their wooers most particularly when they find themselves ordered about; but when Jack Graham begins to tell his wife

Lesbia not to do things, Lesbia finds it a bore. Katharine is left at the gates of matrimony, but I make no doubt that she asserted herself a little afterwards. This sweet submissiveness to masculine caprices is only characteristic of the bachelor woman who associates with man as an equal, not of the lady in whom matrimony soon teaches him to recognise his superior. Upon the whole, then, it does not seem likely that the advent of the working gentlewoman is likely to rule man out. Man will continue to be as interesting to woman as woman is to man, in spite of the predictions of Italian professors.

But that does not alter the fact that there exists a new class, a new social type, and we may interrogate our wittesses about it. Listen to Miss Sharp :

“‘Think of the progress that has been made even in my time,’ says an enthusiastic lady to Katharine, ‘and in another ten years there will be nothing that woman will not be able to do in common with men. Isn’t it a glorious reflection?’

“‘I don’t think it will be so,’ persisted Katharine. ‘It has nothing to do with

education or any of these things. A woman is handicapped just because she is a woman and has to go on living like a woman. There is always home work to be done, or some one to be nursed, or clothes to be mended. A man has nothing to do but his work ; but a woman is expected to do a woman's work as well as a man's. It is too much for any one to do well. I am a working woman myself, and I don't find it so pleasant as it is painted.'

" 'Tell me,' said her aunt earnestly; don't you find women are happier if they have work to do for their living? '

" 'I suppose it is possible, but I haven't met any who are,' answered Katharine. 'I think it is because they feel they have sacrificed all the pleasures of life. Men don't like women who work, do they? Oh yes, they have lots of admiration for us, but they don't fall in love with us, that's all. I think it is because it is the elusive quality in woman that fascinates man ; and directly they begin to understand her, they cease to be fascinated by her. And woman is growing less mysterious every day now ; she is chiefly occu-

pied in explaining herself, and that is why men don't find her such good fun. At least, I think so.'"

One may say in passing that if the race of women stoned Miss Sharp and Noel Ainslie with stones for giving away their secrets, no man could be surprised. But is Miss Sharp right in describing the working woman as one who gives up the pleasures of life? That is doubtful. The pleasures of idleness and prettiness, perhaps; but unless she has to work to the very pin of her collar, she has really a better time than her predecessors, only that she is not so easily contented. The woman who has lived in Bohemia has one distinguishing mark: she is intolerant of trivialities, and especially intolerant of boredom. This is how Katharine's home struck her when she went back to it in her first holidays:

"Ivingdon seemed narrower in its sympathies and duller than ever; she wondered how people could go on living with so few ideas in their minds and so few topics of conversation; even the rector (her father) irritated her by his want

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of interest in her experiences and by his utter absorption in his own concerns."

Lesbia Meynell marries Jack Graham when a chance takes him from living on a pittance by his art into a good business position, and she emerges from Bohemia into a flat in Kensington. But she finds it dull; the routine of calls and callers bores her to extinction; and when she hears that the pretty Peggy has gone off with a rich young man to Paris, her first movement is one of envy. Peggy, at least, is getting some colour into her life. The fact is that the new denizen of Bohemia falls between two stools—two ways of life. The things which to her mother or grandmother would have seemed quite amusing and gay—a round of afternoon tea-parties, with an occasional dance—no longer amuse her. She wants stronger excitements. And, on the other hand, she is disqualified by her education for what used to be accounted the natural relaxations of Bohemia—the life that Henri Murger sketched, perhaps with more charm than realism. She has no desire to be respectable, she scorns the word; but she has not the least in-

tention of being anything else. Now, the chief desire of all these lady bachelors, in the Bohemia where people work, is to get out of it—so at least their authors testify—and there are only two ways out. One is marriage, the other is not. One leads into society, where people pay calls of ten minutes, the other leads to the Bohemia of champagne and supper-parties. Neither goal is wholly attractive. Occasionally the Bohemian may hit on some half-way house; Lesbia Meynell's husband gives up business, and, having a little money, returns to his painting while she writes, and they live happily for ever after, somewhere in St John's Wood, undisturbed by social duties. But that is the exception. For the most part the bachelor woman has either to grow old in her virtuous Bohemia—and it is not wholly a cheerful fate—or to marry and go into ordinary society.

There is, however, one thing to be said. If she immigrates in sufficient numbers into society she will probably end by modifying its conventions; and it is surprising what a number of women one meets who have, at one time or

another, studied art in Paris, and lived on two or three francs a day when allowances ran short, or assisted in a bonnet-shop, or tried their hands at journalism. A good many, of course, have merely broken away from home for a few months in sheer desire of change, or have set up a studio chiefly in order that they may give tea-parties in it. But however little serious may have been the work they did in their effort to be self-supporting, yet the habit of independence is implanted and a rude shake is given to the old equilibrium. Working gentlewomen who are promoted to the dignity of marriage will probably, by their combined influence, modify social usages to a very considerable extent, though by no means in the direction that Signor Ferrero indicates.

But in the meanwhile they have pioneered the way for a class of celibate women who, under the old conditions, would almost certainly have married. These are the people whom one may venture to call club-women, and they are in many respects the opposite of those about whom Miss Sharp and Noel

Ainslie write. The working gentleman, as we have seen, wants to get married, in order that she may have less work and more comforts ; the club-woman, who is often a widow, remains unmarried for the very same reason, and she seems worth a little study.

By the new arrangements for her existence a woman can go through life with no more responsibilities than if she lived permanently in a hotel, as, indeed, many of the people used to do who are taking to the club and chambers system. She has no ties of any sort ; she does not neglect her duties—she simply has none ; and the result is certainly a great increase in her personal comforts, so much so that one imagines there will be a great falling off in the number of marriages made for convenience, since the women who take to this bachelor way of living are precisely those who used to marry for that motive.

Imagine the middle-aged gentleman in future proposing to the spinster (owning to thirty) who is comfortably installed in chambers. Where must he look for an inducement. "I offer you, my dear

madam, the comforts of a home." "The comforts of a home!" she would reply; "the comforts of a home are for the husband." The husband writes the cheques, it is the wife who has to see that he gets value for his money; and most women will tell you that the chief pleasure of going out to dine is to eat a dinner that you have not ordered. But, setting aside the question of marriage altogether, one would say that the lady with six hundred a year and chambers is better off than she who has double that income and a house. To begin with, she can have chambers in Piccadilly or thereabouts; she can have absolutely all the attendance she wants; everything about her will be well turned out; meals come for the touching of a bell, and instead of a carriage she has her pick of the hansoms. If she wants to go away, she has only to lock her door and give her key to the manager; if she wants to see faces about her and avoid that sense of solitude which has driven so many women into matrimony, all she has to do is to step round to her club. She may if she likes belong to a club

exclusively for ladies, but most women speak disdainfully of these institutions, calling them hen-parliaments ; she will probably prefer a mixed establishment where most rooms are common, but the ladies have their boudoir and the men their smoking-room, inaccessible to the other sex ; curiously enough at these clubs there does not yet exist (we are told) a ladies' smoking-room. That will come. Altogether, the club-woman is incomparably freer, and in every way better equipped for having a pleasant time than any woman could be who was tied down not merely by the old conventions, but by possessing a particular dwelling and servants in her own employment. She has gained enormously in comfort, but it is to be feared that she will lose some of the particularly admired qualities of her sex.

Needless to say, the people under discussion are not pioneers, nor emancipators, nor enthusiasts, nor theorists of any kind. They are highly practical people, who follow the line of least resistance, and who would never do any of these things while they were considered bad form,

but who realise the possibilities open to them, and are well content to be in advance of the world. They are not of the class who possess encumbrances in the shape of old servants worn out in their service, and still entertained out of charity or affection. They are, in short, the unsympathetic, who do not attach themselves strongly to places or persons, and who find it a relief to rid themselves of such ties as a woman inevitably forms if she has a home. The average good woman is a practical philanthropist. She has more or less sympathetic relations with all manner of folks outside her own class; her laundress, her servants (past and present), her charwoman, and so forth—she knows something of their circumstances and helps if there is need. Besides, she used, in a period which is rapidly disappearing, to practise the savage virtue of hospitality, as, for instance, Scott understood it, asking people to stay in her house, not because she wanted to see them, but because they wanted to be asked. All these things lead to friction; ingratitude is annoying, gratitude is often inconvenient; and, as the me-

chanism of society grows more perfect and more complicated, this whole ideal of existence tends to become obsolete. To avoid friction is almost the first precept of life nowadays. The modern woman will, no doubt, continue to be charitable, but it will be after a new fashion. She will not, like the Thibetans who throw petitions into a praying-wheel, urge her entreaty with heaven by paying someone to turn a handle ; but if she wishes to give to the poor she will give her mite or her bounty to a charitable organisation. Her household gods will never "plant a terrible fixed foot," like Lamb's ; no human being can settle anywhere for three months without taking root to some extent, but the manner of her existence will be artfully contrived so as to prevent the fibres from spreading. Hitherto practically woman has never lived in isolation ; if she was not married she lived with a mother, an aunt, sisters, or someone ; at least she had an old servant or two. Now all her surroundings are almost as impersonal as the electric light, or that scarcely more human entity, a club waiter. Living her

bachelor life, she will literally be obliged to consider no one but herself; having no house, she will never be inconvenienced with a request to put up anybody; with the club to fall back on, she will not be obliged to keep in touch with her friends for fear of lacking society; in short, her existence will be, like the stoic philosopher's, rounded off, self-sufficing, complete in itself; and it will be a deplorable thing if any large number of women become Stoic philosophers. People who lived close to each other, if they were in any sort of relations, grew like plants, separate to outward appearance, but with the fibres interlacing and crossing somewhere deep out of sight; if things go on as they are doing, we shall lie beside one another like marbles in a bag; touching, yet mutually exclusive. Women have always been the binding force in human society; home ties are their creation. But it looks at present as if the hotel was going to supersede the home for a considerable number of women, and ultimately for the race; flats are a step in that direction. It seems quite probable that in a

hundred years a woman who employs her own cook and housemaid will be as rare as those are nowadays who have their bread baked at home. The machine, in short, is replacing the individual throughout the world ; but if machinery, human or inanimate, does away with private houses and domestic servants, it will make a most far-reaching change. The house as the centre of hospitality gives to every woman the means of radiating her personal influence, and the servants she employs have always afforded her the readiest occasion for practical beneficence. It will be a bad day for the world if women grow to be no better than men. The Miller of Dee was, no doubt, a very good fellow, but the burden of his song is very ill suited for ladies to whistle.

In short, we seem likely to develop not merely the bachelor-woman, but the old-bachelor-woman, who will be a very different person from the old maid. But whether these new varieties will remain merely superficially distinct, or whether, as Signor Ferrero believes, they will fundamentally modify the nature of woman

and the constitution of society—whether the Institute of Women Journalists and the creation of Albemarle and Sesame Clubs will prove epoch-making institutions, or whether the world will go on much the same in spite of them—are wide questions which only a disciple of Lombroso feels able to answer out of hand. One thing seems clear ; that since women have professed an ability to support themselves, the British paterfamilias, who always encourages self-help in his children and has the easiest views concerning parental responsibility of any father in Europe, will not hesitate to urge upon his daughters the desirability of doing so.

A PLEA FOR APPLE DUMPLINGS

CHARLES LAMB is said to have observed that no man could have a pure soul who did not like apple dumplings. That is a hard saying, since undoubtedly a good heart may go with a bad digestion, and apple dumplings cannot be commended to the dyspeptic. But Lamb is sufficient of a sage for his remarks to bear a metaphorical interpretation, and his gentle protection may be claimed generally for all simplicity in taste. Instead of apple dumpling one may substitute, for instance, in literature, the works of Miss Yonge; perhaps, indeed, for them apple dumpling is too robust and full-flavoured a comparison, and they should be likened rather to the milder delights of rice and prunes. But the mere symbol which one selects is a matter of no consequence, so long as it is a dish which can disagree with no one, and is grateful to every

palate that retains the ingenuous appetites of childhood. The point is, that Lamb, certainly no lover of the mawkish, and one who cultivated to the utmost his capacities of enjoyment, held that a constitution ought to preserve its liking for simple things; and the point is worth underlining, for there is no commoner form of intellectual arrogance than that of the people who tell you that they do not eat sweets and only care for savouries. In vain does one protest that it is possible to consume apple dumpling with enthusiasm even to a second help, and yet love almost beyond discretion oysters and olives, which are the natural aristocracy of flavours, unapproached by any elaboration that the genius of France can concoct: in vain, for those who decline the dumpling will insist, not that they themselves are depraved, but that you, who eat it, are immature, undeveloped, almost even barbarous. Yet, as a matter of fact, there is something wrong with the palate that only cares for strong stimulants; and it is surely a reversion to a barbarism, much earlier than that of the apple dumpling period, which

consumes messes not less unnatural than any which provoked the fine scorn of Horace at the banquet of Nasidienus. Is it really the last word of civilization that we should serve up for a final delicacy raw pickled fish in a preparation of milk?

All this, be it observed, is not an elaborate protest against *anchois à la crème* (which are not nearly so bad as they sound): I merely employ a symbolism, conforming herein to a fashion by which the very latest thing in literature reverts to the infancy of intelligence, just as we borrow various *hors d'œuvre* from regions which dispense with cookery. There scarcely needs an excuse for choosing metaphors from this particular art. If the object of metaphor is to make one's meaning readily intelligible and vividly apprehended, to what physical experience can one appeal with more certainty of awakening associations?

Besides, the range of symbolic description afforded is delightfully wide. It would be possible (and amusing enough) to classify one's acquaintance in terms of dishes, as Goldsmith did so brilliantly

in "Retaliation," though the association of Burke and tongue betrayed him into mere punning. A large number of admirable men would vary from roast beef (with or without horse-radish) to boiled mutton; some would be easily recognisable as cold boiled mutton. Many excellent ladies would go down under the general head of milk puddings, with no sharper differentiation than divides sago from tapioca, cornflour from arrowroot. Mrs. Nickleby is a milk pudding gone sloppy; Mrs. Bennet is a milk pudding burned; each a very ordinary harmless thing, made out of common ingredients, but by some slight accident spoiled in the preparation. If one proceeds to the more distinguished types, there are possibilities which might tempt to a sonnet. Why has no despairing lover likened his mistress to an ice pudding? which, charming as it is, daintily coloured, elaborate, delicious, nevertheless claims costly surroundings; which above all is frigid—and, if you push the metaphor, not altogether wholesome. But from this excursus upon the language of our symbolism, let us return to

the morality of dumpling. Practically I hold a brief for the charm of mere natural sweetness, mere obvious beauty, or, in the extreme case, of mere prettiness.

There are people, possessed with a real love for art, and possessing a real knowledge of it, before whom it requires some courage to express an admiration for Raphael. They snort at you, and drag round the conversation to Velasquez. If after that you are rash enough to praise, let us say, Andrea del Sarto's Holy Family, which hangs beside Leonardo's Virgin of the Rocks in the National Gallery, you will certainly be accused of liking sugar in your tea. Nobody can deny that the picture is beautiful, or fail to see the rich glow of the colouring, the grace of the figures. The Holy Child's soft flesh has the beauty of a ripe fruit, and the whole is suffused in a light absolutely conventional indeed, but serving perfectly to bring out the exquisite lines of the composition. Nothing can be said against it except that it is perhaps a little oversweetened—which is true. Nevertheless, if you compare it, say with the

Velasquez portrait of Philip II., and hint a preference for the Andrea because of its beauty, what will happen? Speaking again symbolically, you will have a boot thrown at you. Yet surely the mere obvious beauty of form and colour, which any eye, however untrained, must perceive, is not an inconsiderable achievement. Take a more crucial instance. When Millais painted "Bubbles" artists deplored, and rightly, that such strength and freedom of handling should be devoted to producing a type of beauty so far lower than that of "Autumn Leaves" or "The Eve of St. Agnes"; but the beauty of the picture is beauty for all that, and not mere prettiness. Yet a great many people decline to find any pleasure in it. The danger in this avoidance of the obvious is that it leads ultimately to a preference for the bizarre. A man who loses the power of seeing this simplest and most widely appreciated type of beauty is liable to see beauty where, to speak plainly, it does not exist, in corruption for instance. Stale fish is phosphorescent, but to insist that it is beautiful and to compose

a canvas with the tones of decaying fish is simply depravity—mental, moral, or physical, as one chooses to put it. There are people with a real feeling for art who have got themselves into such a frame of mind that probably Mr. Aubrey Beardsley's work gives them a keener pleasure than that of any other artist. The taste is quite genuine, but it is undoubtedly depraved. To go back to our metaphor: say that the difference between Andrea and Velasquez is the choice between strawberries and cream, or exquisite meat exquisitely cooked; some will prefer the strawberries, some the chateaubriand. It is a mistake not to be able to get the full pleasure out of both; but a palate is in a bad way when it finds the savouries the best thing in a dinner and craves cayenne with all dishes.

Similarly in literature there are certain qualities which appeal to every intelligence, just as the beauty of Andrea's picture does, without any reference to the critical faculty. A curious instance is supplied by the biographical memoir of Darwin. The great thinker in his

old age lost entirely all appreciation for literature; he could not endure even Shakspeare, who seemed to him intolerably dull. Yet in spite of this defect in his mental endowment, which he, with characteristic humility, rated at its fullest extent, he could and did take pleasure in novels, provided always that they had a happy ending. That is the equivalent for the taste for apple dumpling. The healthy normal individual likes a story with a happy ending, and though he may like other things better, this will always continue to give him pleasure. The man who cannot enjoy a story by Mr. Clark Russell—which is a very fair literary equivalent for the dumpling—may have a fine literary judgment, but his taste would be better if he could on occasion respond to the call of “List! ye Landsmen.” Honest sweets should appeal alike to the educated and the uneducated palate; education shows itself in rejecting trash, the sham sentiment or the theatrical adventure. The untrained appetite gulps down greedily worthless and adulterated confectionery; but on the other hand a taste which is over-

sophisticated by too much indulgence in strong savours cannot relish sweets, honest or dishonest. What is caviare to the general may be excellent good caviare, such as the countesses in Ouida's novels eat with their afternoon tea ; but if I had to make a sacrifice of one or the other delight, I should say, let the sturgeons perish—or rather flourish undisturbed ; I cling to the unaffected joys of dumpling. I would let them burn all the works of Mr. Pater to preserve three or four novels by Sir Walter Besant.

NATURE IN LONDON

ST. JAMES'S PARK is always delightful ; beautiful in summer with flowers and the great willows that hang over the water like green clouds ; but most beautiful by reason of its setting, the long ranges of noble buildings which suggest, as no other place in London can, the imperial city. And its very dignity and splendour gains an added charm of contrast from the quaint intrusion of wildfowl. Sometimes, when Big Ben is tolling out the hour, there comes out of the darkness a coot's shrill cry, sharply defined against that volume of sound. Or else, a little earlier, when the lights are just beginning to be lit, you may be watching the long rows of gas lamps gleaming through wet leafage, and suddenly, with a rush and their characteristic quick wheel on the wing, a brace of duck fly past you, with long necks strain-

ing and short strong wings beating in rapid pulsation—a sight that wakens fowlers' instincts in the country-bred and carries the mind back instantly to the loneliest of lonely places, an Irish bog in driving hail and a brace of mallard getting up before you, or the waiting in half-darkness by some lough-side for flighting birds. Only, there you remember that in twilight fowl are heard before they are seen; here the great city's roar, which the ear has long ceased to take note of, drowns that shrill “ping-ping” among other “lovely and familiar” noises. Nowhere else does the sight make quite the same impression. On the Serpentine, houses are not to be seen, and one might simply be in some magnificent private park. But wherever wildfowl are, they are always a delight to study. Duck are queer creatures. On the wing they suggest wildness more than almost any other bird. Once they are on the water they seem as familiar as barndoor fowl; indeed, it is always a little difficult to shoot at them sitting, and nothing is more in character than their clamorous struggle for breadcrumbs. They

have a great affinity of temperament with the sparrow, and, like him, take kindly to the neighbourhood of man. One can always pass ten minutes comfortably in watching them at their perennial feast, provided by passing children; but the sight is funniest in the Regent's Park when swans take a hand. The swans have a good yard the advantage in reach, but they have their dignity to consider, and the agile ducks, who do not mind a scurry, intercept most of the morsels. Gradually the swan's dignity disappears, but he is not quick enough, and after a savage dab or two at his rivals he retires to sulk till he perceives a duck with a large piece of bread. The duck swims hurriedly off, dipping the bread under water to make it easier to bolt, and the faster he paddles the more furious are his efforts to bolt it. It must be impossible to choke a duck, or they would be all dead by this time. The swan pursues with majestic strokes, gaining every instant, but just as he gets within striking distance the duck spreads wings and squatters away for a few yards, and so it goes on till the bread is either dropped

or bolted, or, as generally happens, the swan gives up in disgust.

The duck on dry land is low comedy personified; swimming, he is still a comedian, plump, roguish, affable, and twinkling. But when he takes to his wings he is—as the Japanese found out long ago—one of the most picturesque things in creation. It is curious to reflect that for almost any study of bird life the painter would be well advised to take his easel to London. In St. James's Park, woodquests, the wildest of all common birds, are as tame as sparrows, and all their beautiful attitudes of flight and perching can be studied there at leisure. Still the truth is that they are not quite seen to advantage in point of colour: the sheen of their breasts, the pure soft grey of their backs, loses its purity in this grime-laden atmosphere. But the waterfowl are always fresh from their tub, unless, indeed, in a frost, when even the seagulls look dingy. Seagulls—as artists have not failed to see—have great possibilities for decoration; and though they are shy enough in the country—ex-

cept when following a plough—wherever there is a town and a tideway they will beat the air along the wharves, hovering incessantly over the water, in the hope of some morsel of garbage disgorged from a sewer. These are models accessible in a number of places; mallard do not, except in London, offer to inspection the warm tones of their plumage. But the Japanese, who spare the life of birds, have always lived in close intimacy with these engaging creatures, and on their screens and panels, even in their needlework, one finds represented with the utmost fidelity all the moments in a duck's flight. Ducks do not rise easily from the water. First they raise themselves on their broad flat feet, and then spread the wings; if the flight is only to be a short one they skim straight off, striking the water with the first few wing beats. But when they rise, as they do when flushed by a spaniel, for strong flight, the head and neck are a little thrown back, so that two or three strokes lift them almost straight into the air. Then for a moment—and that is the time for your first barrel—they steady

themselves and regain balance, with the neck straining forward, and the feet, which have been hanging hitherto, now point out straight behind. Then away they go, hardly ever in a straight line, but taking a wide sweep before they fix the direction. Before they pitch, they circle again, as one may see them do at the Round Pond after coming over from the Serpentine, then steady the wings and slide down with the impetus they have got up. Just before they touch the water the head is thrown back, the feet thrown forward, their webbed soles strike the surface first, and they drive two or three yards along it with the rush of their flight, and in a moment, from beautiful wild creatures, they are transformed into roguish and importunate mendicants, humorously familiar with humanity.

Another thing not easily to be seen out of London is a cormorant fishing. The one in the Regent's Park—alas! there is only one—takes his meals with the most civilised regularity three times a day. All the day he is on the water, fish are abundant, but he only feeds at his own hours. The cormorant is a mis-

represented bird ; yet it is true that when he feeds he feeds well ; I saw him take eighteen fish in five minutes or little over. There was a dive ; in a second or two the black snaky neck appeared perhaps ten yards off, with a silver something held crossways in his beak. There was a shake and a wriggle of the neck, and the silver found a new currency ; and so on again. When the meal is over and the fishing done, the fisher gets on to a secluded point, and, raising his wings like the beam of a cross, he hangs himself out to dry. The sight of this performance would convince anyone interested in trout streams that in the struggle for existence cormorants have the upper hand of trout, and that a charge of shot is a useful corrective of the inequality.

Waterfowl are, for good and obvious reasons, the only things that look quite the same in London as elsewhere. London leafage is beautiful enough, but not so beautiful as the other. Even in winter, when trees are bare poles, there is an immense difference in colour. In the country, hedgerows and copses are brown and grey and purple ; the trees in Ken-

sington Gardens are all in varying tones of sepia. Perhaps, after all, a touch of fog is the most becoming light for a London park in winter. The other day the Serpentine was a sheet of glass, only broken by the trail of ducks swimming; on the west of it the trees were plain to see, and their reflection plain also, but just a little blurred with mist. Light had no direction, but was diffused equally; the sky was a dull yellowish grey; and the grass had a green that simply does not exist elsewhere, a green with no yellow in it, but a great deal of black; the whole thing suggested the flat unobtrusive tones of a Japanese print. There are things more beautiful, but it was very beautiful, and to an extraordinary degree paintable. Mr. Whistler could probably in an hour or two have put the whole thing with literal accuracy on to canvas, and people who did not know London effects would have cried out at it for a false and capricious impression.

THE SENSE OF SMELL

AMONG the chilly abstracts of wisdom which Bacon chose to style his "Essaies" there are just two which bring us close to the great and humane, but too human, statesman and philosopher. In one he plans the house, in the other he lays out the garden that his soul would desire ; and the pair, to modern imaginations, afford a strange contrast of magnificent and homely aspirations. The house, or palace rather, is such as a railway king or a brewer might pay for nowadays, but would be hard set to procure, for want of an Inigo Jones to design it. The garden, on the other hand, is spacious enough indeed—thirty acres of ground ; but what modern gardener in a country squire's employment would not scoff at its products ? Here is no talk of hothouse plants, of fifty-guinea orchids, and the rest ; you have not even the

ixias, the begonias, calceolarias, pelargoniums, fuchsias, chrysanthemums, and all the commonplaces of modern horticulture ; beautiful flowers with hideous names—beautiful and scentless. Bacon's pleasance would be no better than a kitchen garden nowadays ; the flowers he mentions have for the most part been flowers since Adam delved ; and he is not above reckoning the blossom of the fruit trees among the beauties of his flower garden. In the list of blooms for every season which follow each other "in the Royall ordering of Gardens," pear, plum, and apple are duly recorded. It must be allowed that in the autumn months his flower garden fails him, and he has to fall back chiefly on fruit to produce what he calls "Ver perpetuum"—meaning, as Virgil meant too, an unbroken succession of growth and loveliness. One may readily imagine with what delight and wonder he would have beheld September in a modern garden, with its dahlias, chrysanthemums, and Japanese anemones ; yet it is the old flowers, the flowers of his growing, that sweeten the year to us, and not the new

creations—"Nature's bastards." There is scarcely a flower he names that is scentless, and scarcely one fragrant—except sweet pea—that is not in his garden.

He refines upon the matter even. "And because the Breath of Flowers is farre sweeter in the aire (where it comes and goes like the Warbling of Musick) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight than to know what be the Flowers and Plants that do best perfume the Aire." Roses, damask and red, are "fast flowers of their smell, and do not readily diffuse them; yea, though it be in a morning's dew." Bay and rosemary are little better; but sweetest of all in the air is the violet, "and specially the double white violet," the blue-veined flower that Perdita likens to the lids of Juno's eyes. Next is the musk-rose or moss-rose, which you will only find now in rare cottage gardens, or amongst ignorant and old-fashioned people. The heavy-headed monsters of the shows have often not more scent than the artificial flowers from which it is so hard to distinguish them.

Sweet-briar, wallflowers, and pinks are there, of course ; but he adds two odours that few people would think of : " Strawberry leaves, dying, which yield a most Excellent Cordiall smell ;" and " the Flower of the Vines. It is a little dust, like the dust of a Bent, which grows upon the cluster in the First comming forth." Honeysuckle must be " somewhat afar off ;" the heady scent of the mayblossom he tacitly excludes. Bean flowers alone are too humble for his garden : " of them I speake not, because they are Field Flowers." But in addition to the flowers proper you are to set " whole allies " of " burnet, wild thyme, and water mints," which " perfume the aire most delightfull, being Trodden upon and Crushed." How fresh and sweet it all is ! How unlike the odourless expanses of a modern garden, with its beds laid out to look like Brussels carpets, and its glaring contrasts of geranium and lobelia ! Surely the gardeners are on a wrong tack. Why garden to the eye only ? Have we not noses as well as our ancestors ?

That is just the question. Certainly,

by comparison with other civilisations, we neglect the sense of smell. Scents for the person are used sparingly even by ladies, and by men, with few exceptions, not at all. Very likely the flowers for a dinner-party may cost as much as the wine; but we have come far from the days when Horace invited Virgil to club for a dinner, and offered to furnish a cask of wine against a casket of nard. Spikenard is a hard ordeal for European noses, scarcely more acceptable than the "spicy garlic smells" of Mr Kipling's East. But it would take a deal of any unguent to draw a cask, were it only of Marsala, from the cellars of a London Sulpicius. Indeed, it seems to us the faintest and least palpable of pleasures to gratify the sense of smell; yet the Romans, who were of all peoples perhaps the most prone to this indulgence, were gross livers and gross feeders. Horace complains that olive groves were going out of cultivation, replaced by violet beds and all manner of nosegays; and those were the days when wild boar, well hung, was counted a delicacy. Odours, indeed, are necessary when—*putet aper*—a boar

is on the board. Whatever be the cause, indoor scents have gone out of fashion, almost out of repute. To smell of nothing is, perhaps, a room's highest excellence—unless it be of mignonette. But out of doors there can be no pleasure more refined than the sweet breath of nature, and clearly we do not care so much about it as Bacon did. Why not? Is tobacco to blame? It looks like it, we must say. The nose, after a pipe, is not good for much more than to detect an escape of gas or the presence of a brickfield in the neighbourhood; and there must result from the habit a general deadening of the sense of smell. Perhaps the loss is not so great after all; it might even be plausibly argued that dwellers in towns would positively gain by disestablishing the olfactory nerves. There is so little pleasure conveyed by them, so much that causes the smeller to blaspheme. And it is certainly not through this sense that we gain enjoyment from the pipe. Except for the first whiff or two, no man smells his own tobacco, and very few like to smell their neighbour's. There are, of

course, Turkish growths that carry a perfume in the mention ; but you must go to the East to get them—neither for price nor prayer are they in this land obtainable. At all events, the pleasures of smell seem decidedly on the decline ; and we are much mistaken if this may not fairly be set down in the indictment against My Lady Nicotine ; but probably a jury of Londoners would assess the damage to humanity at a very low figure.

Still the matter is worth thinking over. Why not plant alleys of thyme hedged about with sweet-briar ? The answer is, Because your gardener would not let you. You cannot exhibit a scent in the local flower show, and the modern gardener is part scientist, part prize-hunter, and wholly autocrat. Yet to plant a few great tangles of sweet-briar in Hyde Park would be a ready way of spreading poetry broadcast with every waft of the summer winds ; for there is no other sense so strong to conjure up images by the natural magic of association as that of smell. The scent of the gorse, the sea's salt breath, the fresh exhalations of

new-ploughed land, make a man realise he is in the country, and give him country thoughts as hardly even the music of birds can do. Particular odours recall with great vividness particular scenes ; a friend of mine who had been brought up as a child in the West Indies could not pass a sugar-factory in grimy English towns without a sudden vision of blacks working on the plantation in a glare of sunlight. Probably, indeed, in our whole conscious experience, we owe more to our noses than we are aware. "Unconscious cerebration" is a terrible name for a very simple fact. A laurel leaf is visible (to good eyes) at a hundred yards, but its colour is not distinguishable ; a laurel bush at the same distance shows green—we can perceive the accumulated result of numerous slight impressions, each of which is singly indistinguishable. Exactly in the same way the nose perceives a crowd, though not (as a rule) the individual. However unpleasant the fact looks when crudely stated, each of us emits a smell by which he can be distinguished or recognised. Are we not obscurely conscious of what our dogs

feel distinctly? May not instinctive preferences or repugnances be partially accounted for thus? Language is deficient on this point, just as the vocabulary of Homer is short of words to express colour. Possibly, in the course of ages, the science and the terminology of the subject may develop side by side. Our remote descendants may explore the affinities of perfume and invite each other to a concert of odours—why not? The tendency, doubtless, is at present in the other direction; the sense of smell is much more acute in savages than in civilised people. So, however, is their sense of hearing, yet their musical perceptions are not on a level with ours. It does not follow because the sense of smell has lost its intensity that it is incapable of æsthetic education.

DAFFODILS

LONDON has this advantage over the country, that the promise of spring comes quicker in the heart of dreary winter. Out of town in January the most you could hope to see would be a few snow-drops, pale and diffident harbingers. But in London, once the chrysanthemums are over and done with, all the streets fill with daffodils calling from the barrows and shop-fronts a radiant assurance that before very long fogs will scatter, and sunshine be a real presence, not a chilly ghost of itself. The daffodil is spring's challenge to winter; scarlet tulips are (as Théophile Gautier said) like a trumpet-note, but scarlet is summer's livery, and tulips are an exotic. Daffodils in January must have grown in a hothouse—we all know that—but it is easy in London streets to forget it, when there is no torpid vegetation to give the lie to such gay braggadocio. Yellow is the colour of

spring flowers, and there is no yellow in all the flower world so pure and so exhilarating as the daffodil's. They are almost the only country-bred flowers that can face the grime of London streets without drooping. You can cut them and their leaves, and still they are themselves ; a primrose is not a primrose once it is torn from its setting. Wallflowers make grand masses of colour, rich and unfading, but they keep an air of rusticity ; your daffodil naturally lends itself to the graces of the town : there is no better symbol of the modern woman.

Slender, gay, and irresponsible, they sway and flutter for the lightest impulse ; their nature is in motion, not in rest ; they have not the majestic calm of lilies, nor the sobriety of wallflower. Art has taught them, and their nature lent itself easily to the lesson, to be freakish and fantastic in outline ; no other blossom has so many profiles, so many aspects ; from the pale, almost puritanic frill of the corolla to the golden heart of the trumpet it is a startling transition of colour that a puff of wind may flash on you. See a row of them in a garden on a rainy day

and half the blooms will be prostrate, battered, grovelling; next morning there they are nodding gaily at you, except a few unhappy (those you gather up lovingly and resuscitate—if they are not too hopelessly bedraggled) who have either been caught in the mud or snapped off short by the gale. Is not that the modern woman—nervous, a creature of moods, audacious or abject? And if you watch a little gust strike a clump of daffodils growing on a lawn, you see them bend before it, and put up their frills like umbrellas to keep their finery out of mischief; while all the leaves show their grey underside, till you think of pretty women and the flutter of petticoats at a muddy crossing.

THE SPORTING INSTINCT

AT the season of the year, when tired legislators, no longer cooped up in St. Stephen's, delight to hear the ring of their pet breech-loader, and to see the feathers fly up in a cloud, certain journals raise their annual lament over the barbarous pleasures of the aristocracy. It is hardly necessary to defend the sporting instinct, which is no less native to man than vanity. It finds freest play, indeed, among the wealthy, for the very simple reason that they alone can afford to gratify it. The French are not supposed to be keen sportsmen, yet probably more people shoot in France than in this country, since democratic institutions decide that many should have bad shooting rather than a few should have it good. Mr. Froude believed that the business of sport took up more space in life than it used to ; that the adventurous strain, which made buccaneers of Drake and

Hawkins, found its only outlet nowadays on the moors. Certainly Dr. Jameson's lieutenants all belonged to the class which makes fabulous bags of grouse ; but we doubt if Mr. Froude was right in his general conclusion. *Allons tuer quelquechose*, says the proverbial Englishman when he is feeling dull, and he has always said so. The desire to go out and kill something has always existed, as far as records go back, quite apart from the necessity for food. Moreover, the pleasure has always resided as much in the killing as in the chase (except where the game is killed by dogs or hawks) ; that is clear, since every one who could afford it has always had his game driven to him. The battue is probably as old as Nimrod. Of course the killing should be done cleanly, and at a distance ; butcher's work is disagreeable, though schoolboys have been known to tip a butcher to let them pole-axe cattle. Even to knock a salmon on the head is not all joy ; a wounded hare is a disagreeable experience, and to stop a winged curlew's unearthly screaming gives one the sensation of committing

murder. Cock and snipe are the best things to shoot : they play the game decently, fall if you touch them, generally dead ; and if not, they never run, but lie there meekly, brown, bright-eyed, vanquished little things ; and a very little tap on the head settles their business. Still one would rather not have to give it. Sport is a queer taste when you come to think about it ; but the point is that one does not ; and it is a keen pleasure to see a bird get up and dexterously stop it ; to prove that all its swift-ness, all its turnings on the wing, avail it nothing against your superior skill and resources.

That is probably the root of the matter. The impulse to kill for sport is simply love of power and delight in the exercise of it ; which, by the way, is Hobbes's definition of benevolence. The sense of power given by the possession of fire-arms sends schoolboys walking about with loaded revolvers in their pockets, and costs a considerable number of lives per annum. *Qui nolunt occidere quemquam, posse volunt.* And the pleasure of successful sport is inseparable from the

act of killing. One may even question if primitive man did not begin by killing to assert his own superiority, and go on to eat the slain as a supreme insult. So the race ceased to be vegetarian. The instinctive sense of triumph is what one feels in killing game; there is no survival from an aboriginal pleasure at procuring dinner. People are very contemptuous about shooting for the pot; but if a man goes out and picks up a casual partridge or lands a nice trout, he very properly reflects that here is something which will diversify existence and be an incident in the daily *menu*. However, this is only a reflection with him, and it makes no part of the impulse to kill. It belongs chiefly to the later periods of life, and has nothing to say to serious shooting. A stray woodcock shot near his own door in frost is such a gratification to the country parson; it suggests to his mind savoury meats such as his soul loves. But when it comes to shooting fifty or a hundred brace of grouse, the bag is out of all proportion to appetite. *Non tuus hoc capiet venter plus ac meus*. The only consideration in the mind of every one

concerned is the shooting. And observe that this pleasure does not depend on a mere display of skill. Nobody likes to have his eye wiped. everybody likes to get more than his fair share of the birds; but skill can be shown just as well at clay-pigeon shooting, yet the clay pigeon languishes in obscurity. The pleasure in killing is the pleasure of asserting your individuality at the expense of another.

No doubt the ideal way of doing this is in a duel between man and beast. Ten yards more, and the lion was on top of you; now you are on top of the lion. But to get this sort of thing a man has to go and look for it, at great trouble and expense; besides there are qualifying considerations. It is not every one that cares to pit his personality against a lion's. With grouse or mallard the wager is not so serious for the shooter; still, even in the more domestic kinds of sport it is a combat, and there are different ways of winning it. Generally speaking, no one cares to shoot a thing sitting, because anybody could hit it; the conditions in the contest between man and beast are

too unequal. But almost anybody will pot almost anything when he has to stalk it. In this case the object is to approach your game, not to show your skill upon a bird in flight; and to attain this object men will risk rheumatic fever and spend winter nights floating in a punt or squatted in a barrel—a sport hardly less dangerous than tiger-shooting.

The delight in field craft, in watching trained dogs find game, or in finding it by one's own skill, has often been praised at the expense of mere shooting as the true and only sportsmanship; but very few, even among naturalists, have found it its own sufficient reward. A compromise has been suggested by the author of *Wild Life in the Rockies*, who recommends a camera-gun; though if you want to take snapshots at grizzlies, it is considered well to have a Winchester handy. The invention has one great advantage. Formerly the humane naturalist had to be content with telling traveller's tales of which no one would believe a syllable, if he did not bring home a handsome show of skins. Nowadays he can make

his bag of negatives, and no one, man or beast, is a hair the worse ; for, although human beings in their hours of retirement would often sooner face a revolver than a kodak, probably antelopes are not so particular.

Yet though here and there the naturalist, who is latent in every true sportsman, may exchange gun for camera and cease to be a killer, it is to be feared that fallen man will continue to take life for his pleasure. And after all, sportsmen are not bad fellows, particularly those who have no sentimental emotions towards their game. Byron accused every fisherman of cruelty, from Izaak Walton downwards, a charge that came well from Byron. Certainly a man who has imagination enough to enter into a salmon's feelings should not fish : it becomes almost a crime. Maupassant, among his singular and morbid studies, has left a piece entitled *Amour*, describing his own passion for sport and his spasms of remorseful pity. Once he went down to shoot duck with a cousin, equally keen for sport, but of less active sensibility ; "*roux, très fort et très barbu*,

gentilhomme de campagne, demi-brute aimable," as Maupassant civilly puts it. The waiting in the bitter cold before dawn, the fire in a hut of ice slabs, the flight and fall of the birds are all rendered with his amazing touch. Last of all, when the reports have almost driven away the fowl, Maupassant shoots one out of a brace of teal. The other, instead of flying off, circles round and round. "Hist," says the cousin, "you've shot its mate." Round and round the bird circles, uttering its plaintive call nearer and nearer, till the cousin fires, and the big dog splashes in, retrieves it, and lays it beside its fellow. Maupassant takes the next train to Paris. People who feel like that about shooting ought not to shoot. But whether they are morally superior to the average sportsman is another question.

COLONELS AND THE CONTEMPORATIVE LIFE

THERE are probably no people in Great Britain more addicted to grumbling than the officers who retire on a colonel's pension to Bath, Cheltenham, Westward Ho, and whatever other places retired colonels most affect. Doubtless, however, many find consolation in the thought that this seclusion from active life is the destiny which Plato marked out for the choicer citizens of his ideal commonwealth. His "guardians" were, like our officers, to be selected by competitive examination from such well-born youths as had learnt to read and write and sit a horse as a gentleman should; their education was to be in "music" and "gymnastic." By "music," as Plato finely says, is meant those studies which influence the mind as fresh breezes and the scent of flowers affect the body; in short, which do for a

lad what sanguine people expect of a classical education. By "gymnastic," to which undivided attention was to be given for a period of years, he clearly foreshadowed the average public-school training. When the selection was finally made, a severer discipline followed, under which knowledge was pursued for its own sake, not for the indirect results; and this may answer roughly to the studies at Woolwich or Sandhurst, though Plato would have censured either curriculum as basely and contemptibly technical. Finally, when education was completed, Plato's student was plunged into the service of the State, to mix in the turmoil of life, and work with imperfect tools in a world of low aims, where nothing is stable or permanent—what Mr. Kipling calls "a slack *Kutchah* sort of country." At the age of fifty the "guardians" were to retire and depart gladly "to graze at will in the meadows of philosophy." It is true they might be called upon from time to time to leave their retirement and serve their State: but, to judge from our own experience, these occasions would have been rare, and the competition for

such employment (among retired guardians) keen with a vengeance. Their real business, if business it can be called, was to live the contemplative life; to crown their existence with knowledge of the ideal good, which is also perfect beauty, the vision for which the studies, experience, and discipline of former years had only now sufficiently prepared them.

The existence of most retired officers is a curious commentary upon the contemplative life. True, here and there one understands devotion to an ideal purer than Plato's, and fulfils in spirit Peele's beautiful lines—

“ His helmet now must make a hive for bees,
And, lovers' sonnets turned to holy psalms,
The man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,
And feed on prayers which are age's alms.”

Not infrequently they leave the army to join the Church militant; and in many places local resistance to the advancing tide of ritualism is headed by a gentleman who has acquired in the service a strict sense of discipline. Many devote themselves to photography; more to golf; and there are some who, in a zeal for

unsystematised knowledge that would hardly commend itself to Plato, attend the most surprising number of lectures upon the greatest variety of incongruous subjects. Some lapse into a somnolent existence at their clubs, whence they awake periodically to grumble; some—how small a part!—find settled occupation; some marry, and live happy ever after. But upon the whole they form a large class of well-educated men striving laboriously to find work to do, and unable to find it—a sufficiently lamentable sight. They serve on committees and local boards; but a man may serve on a hundred committees, and yet it does not fill his existence so well as the paltriest occupation that he can call his own. If he lives in the country he may garden and cure his own bacon, and this is perhaps the best thing he can do; but, after all, it is hardly a career. He has spent his prime in the service of the State, and asks no better than to devote his age also; but the State will have none of him. When a lawyer, a doctor, a politician, or divine is just established in his reputation, at the age when Cæsar and

Cromwell were barely beginning to be famous, he is abruptly cut off from his occupation and flung into a kind of enforced idleness. No doubt twenty or thirty years in India leave a man somewhat of a squeezed lemon, but this cannot be said of an ordinary career in the army; and in many cases compulsory retirement is a severe sentence, even when it does not hit a man in the pocket. When it does, he may well be excused for grumbling. After the pleasant importance of commanding a regiment, with horse allowance, soldier-servants, and the rest, to pass into life on a pension is hard for a man with belongings. If he is really poor, he has only one occupation and one preoccupation—the care of his health, which too often becomes a tragic anxiety. A retired officer—the case is, unhappily, not imaginary—had a son who was dying at home one winter. But the father had portionless daughters as well, and the doctors had ordered him not to quit the Engadine as he valued his life; so he stayed where he was, torn between two affections. Even men who retire from the army with ample means

and strong influence do not, as one might fairly expect, win names for themselves in a new field. They get into Parliament; but Mr. Campbell-Bannerman carried more weight upon the Army Estimates than Sir George Chesney. It seems as if the English army system stiffened a soldier for other uses. Even in India, which makes so many men for England, the foremost names are not those of military men. Clive, the chief of all Indian conquerors, was a civilian; John Lawrence, the civilian, was a greater force in war than his brother Henry, the soldier. Sir Charles Napier, whose name ranks with theirs, was a soldier, indeed, but one who throughout his life was in revolt against military red tape.

What is the defect? Plato would say their education; and that if the State means to keep men idle, it should so train them that they could be contentedly idle. Possibly, no other service has quite the same effect upon a man as the British. Where almost every man is required to learn soldiering, the professional soldier is not so sharply marked off from the rest of his countrymen; the transition

from the civil to the military capacity may be less abrupt. At all events, with us, once a soldier, a man is always a soldier. He belongs almost to a caste. In no country does the military profession confer upon an officer a higher social status; in none does it cut him off more completely from civil employment. Even in literature, which is open to all, those soldiers who write are still hampered by military etiquette—the tradition of the service. When the British Army found its *vates sacer*, he was a young man and a journalist; it is to be doubted whether any officer would have written "Barrack-Room Ballads" or "Soldiers Three" even if he could. Officers are proud of the Service, and jealous of its claim that every individual should submit himself to be moulded to the regulation type in ideas and language not less than in his clothes. But when the process is done with, a man is so completely fitted for the system, so grooved into his place, his whole being is so set into one pattern, that when the system ruthlessly throws him off, like a fired cartridge, you can no more use him

for any other purpose than you can go snipe-shooting with a Martini-Henry. So he is laid by to rust, like a discarded rifle—serviceable still, but not wanted. However, one fact is plain—that though retired officers grumble, no other class is so eager to get its sons into the Army.

DOMESTICITY

I AM always a little sorry for foreigners, not only because they cannot have inherited the peculiar excellencies proper to our race, but especially because they will never know that tranquil complacency which rests upon our assured monopoly of all the virtues. It is, however, a little curious to find ourselves being admired precisely for a lack of those qualities which we particularly arrogate to ourselves. If there is one article of belief upon which the average Englishman holds unshaken convictions, it is that domesticity is the prevailing characteristic of his country, whereas foreigners, and especially Frenchmen, are a debauched and dissipated crew, who set in very light estimation the sanctity and sweetness of home life. Innumerable writers, of whom the late Archbishop Trench is a conspicuous example, have enlarged upon the fact that the word

home (those four consecrated letters) has no exact equivalent in the French language, and have drawn from this premise inferences most damaging to our neighbours and most comfortable for ourselves.

And yet, as a matter of fact, quite recently French public opinion was keenly excited over a book by M. Paul Demolins, who accepted (just like Archbishop Trench) the "superiority of the Anglo-Saxons," and endeavoured to account for the phenomenon. France, he admitted, is going to the wall. And why? His answer may be summed up in a sentence. Our domesticity undoes us. Sons will not leave their parents to go to school; the parting is more than they can endure. Parents will scarcely allow their sons to accept lucrative work a hundred miles off. Every father in France is hampered in the struggle for existence by the sense of parental obligation, which compels him not merely to educate his children adequately to their station, but to provide each of them with a portion sufficient for his or her maintenance in the world. All the efforts of life are directed to keeping the home-circle as complete as possible

within the smallest range of space, and to ensuring for every member of that circle an equal provision of comfort and well-being. Hence follow many consequences: the restriction of population, the absence of colonising energy, the total lack of initiative among youths. But I do not want to follow M. Demolins into his political argument. I merely wish to point out that we present ourselves to our neighbours as an admirably undomestic people. The Spartans were models to Greece, but they were not domestic in their habits; and the modern French observer praises or censures British fathers and mothers for their Spartan qualities. The British paterfamilias is always willing that his son should go into the most fighting army in existence, or risk his health in an Indian climate serving his Queen. In many cases he is not less willing that a troublesome lad should betake himself to the Colonies, or to America, and there find employment as a stockrider or a policeman, a car driver or a waiter. The paterfamilias has a sense of the respectable which would prevent his acquiescing

in such an arrangement while his son remained in these islands, but let the son go over-seas to a country where, as pater-familias flatters himself, there are no distinctions of class, and why should not these things be? He washes his hands of an encumbrance.

I am putting here the dark side of what is undoubtedly the greatest element in our national success. Enterprise has grown so habitual to the race, that the edge of separation is blunted by familiarity, though one would be slow to assert that ties are weaker for that. Scarcely a family but has its exile, expatriated it may be for life, or at least for long years; and many of these exiles have their places kept fresh in the constant tendance of memory. Mr Kipling has written a song of the Overland Mail. That service links the life of the Empire together, and there are two ends to the link; nerves thrill not less where it holds to home than at its outermost branches among the Afghan snows or the roses of Cashmere. If you go to Tilbury Docks and watch the start of an outward-bound steamer you will see few but dry-eyed

partings; only here and there the lips of a mother writhe with the silent agony. Men shake hands, and from the tugboat and the steamer's deck handkerchiefs flutter; so it is over. The absence of demonstration argues something more than a mere reticence of temperament. Our families tend to scatter; and we are contented that they should. We go each our own way to contract new ties for ourselves, but we do not mean that they should hamper us or other people beyond what seems to us a reasonable limit. Our attitude in the whole matter is to my mind a virtue, but not the virtue of domesticity, and it is no doubt a little exasperating to foreigners that we should take credit for both. It would not be hard for a Frenchman to argue on grounds apparently irresistible that domestic ties were stronger and closer in France than among us.

The contrast between the two races in this respect was strongly borne in on me the other day when I chanced to be staying at a little inn among the Norman forests. Needless to say, the majority of its shifting inmates were English. Some were married couples; there were

wives without their husbands and husbands without their wives ; but there was no family On the other hand, among the few French there was one really touching example of domesticity ; a middle-aged father and mother with their baby and its nurse. All of them had their meals together, and none of them seemed to be happy if any of the others were out of sight. One day I chanced to come upon the husband reading his newspaper in the forest a few hundred yards from the hotel. When I came in, there was a general air of emotion about the establishment, the wife and the nurse were anxiously seeking everywhere for the truant. With an impulse which I feel to have been undomestic I refrained from betraying his whereabouts ; but when I saw the rapture of their greeting on his return and his obvious distress at the anxiety he had occasioned I was sorry I had not spoken. No British father that I had ever seen was so essential to the happiness of his family as was this Frenchman ; and certainly his devotion to his infant was without parallel in my experience. No trace of false shame would

prevent him from wheeling the perambulator up and down before the inn, running with little short steps, and puffing or whistling to counterfeit a railway train. These manifestations of fondness only excited the contempt alike of the English men and English women who scoured the country on vagrant bicycles, devoutly thankful, so far as my acquaintance among them enabled me to judge, to have escaped from the sights and sounds of their nurseries. Of course, from the English point of view (which I fully share), the devoted French parent was an ass; but is it not a little undomestic to think so?

Are we really as enthusiastically attached to our homes and families as the French? That is the question which a visit to France always inclines me to ask myself. There is no doubt that, among the poorer classes, the Frenchwoman understands better how to make herself and her man comfortable than does the corresponding person in England. As for the richer, one must remember that it was the English who invented the club, and this, although it is an admirable

achievement, is scarcely a tribute to the attractions of the British home. In our amusements also we are less gregarious; we tend to take each his own line, and are less prone to the idea of enjoyments to be shared by the whole family.

A very amusing book by M. Henri Lavedan, recently published under the title of "*Les Beaux Dimanches*," confirms me in this impression. His *dimanches* are sketches in dialogue of typical French Sundays, and at least one of them shows the French parent as a martyr to domesticity. In "*Que fait-on Tantôt*" ("What are we going to do?") you have a picture of the decent French bourgeois, a literary man, blessed with five daughters; and the father and mother are planning what must be done to amuse the five little girls this Sunday afternoon. The mother would sooner go peaceably to church by herself, but she recognises the inevitable and is ready to accompany them. The girls would prefer that their father should come too; it is he who makes little jokes for them, who insists that they shall all wear their best pink hats, and never thinks twice about a cab-fare.

Only they cannot agree among themselves what they want to do ; papa suggests a number of agreeable things, but mamma finds an objection to all of them ; the skating-rink costs too much, the Bois puts notions into the pretty daughter's head, and the amusements that are cheap and not too amusing have all been used up. So the debate goes on, while the unfortunate father does his best to keep everybody in good humour, till, looking out of the window, he sees that Providence has sent rain. That settles the question ; there can be no going out, and papa retires to his books, not a little relieved. This is scarcely the *rôle* which the British father reserves to himself in a well-regulated household. And even when the French father is not precisely a martyr, his notion of enjoyment is unmistakeably to enjoy himself in the bosom of his family.

The second of M. Lavedan's scenes, "Partie de Campagne," passes up-stairs over the shop of a little dyer and cleaner, M. Boleau. It is seven o'clock of an August morning, and the whole family is running about eagerly preparing for

the great picnic. M. Boleau, in his shirt-sleeves, enquires anxiously after the pie, the salad, and the cheese, and in the interval clamours for his shaving-water. Madame reassures him, and he celebrates the advent of his new horse and carriage. It is a great day for the Boleau household, an envious day for the quarter: the Boleaus have at last attained to the dignity of a *voiture*. So with the new purchase they are all setting off to take their *déjeuner* out of doors at Villejuif. M. Boleau knows a spot, with gardens all round it, trees, flowers, and delightful turf. They will sit down on a bank by the roadside, unpack the basket ("carefully," says Madame) and lunch "like kings." Madame Boleau will take off her hat to eat with more comfort. But the ice? Has it been forgotten? Certainly not; it is wrapped up in one of M. Boleau's old flannel waistcoats. And in the middle of all this pleasant fuss, the carriage comes round. Lucie, the little girl, sees it first, and all the family crowd to the window. Madame Boleau admits in a whisper that she is a little awestruck (*ça m'impressionne*). "Ah," says M.

Boleau, in a moment of expansion, "think how many pairs of gloves cleaned that represents!" The horse is splendid; nobody would see that he has been *couronné*, which is the pretty French phrase for little marks on his knees. The only thing that Madame Boleau cannot quite make up her mind about is his name, Cæsar,—“a Greek name,”—decidedly he will have to get another. M. Boleau retires hastily to his room to finish his toilet. “What tie do you advise?” he cries from inside; and Madame recommends a pea-green. The dialogue goes on for a minute or two through the half-open door, till suddenly a great and bitter cry comes from the bed-room, and M. Boleau appears on the threshold, strangely distraught. “*Cocotte*,” he cries, and Madame, in tender alarm, answers “*Mon loup*.” “*Cocotte, cocotte!*” cries M. Boleau, and Madame adjures him to speak. “My poor children,” gasps the head of the household. “What, what?” “I have the toothache!” Wife and daughter fling themselves upon him and assure him that it will go off; they suggest remedies; but the pain increases,

M. Boleau grows uncontrollable. he curses the injustice of heaven. "It is all up with the picnic,—unharness Cæsar—and all because I am a poor miserable dyer. Smart people never have toothache, not they. Ah, such a picnic!" Finally he falls to smashing the furniture. It is a poignantly domestic tragedy. The household is so closely united in its joys and sorrows, that the centre of the family communicates even his toothache to the rest. It seems to them the most natural thing in the world; when the cousin comes in at the last moment to go with them, he hears the picnic is off. "Why?" he asks; and Lucie answers simply, "*Papa a sa dent.*"

Seriously, it is comic enough, but quite typical of an intensely domestic people, who are domestic even in their most undomestic relations. The young Frenchman is exceedingly prone to set up an extra-legal *ménage*; and as for the undomestic woman, one of the funniest of M. Lavedan's sketches describes the establishment of a young person who has been promoted to prosperity if not to honour, and reserves her Sundays strictly for

seeing her family. Her parents, industrious market-gardeners, and even her uncles, flock to see her possessions, to snap up unconsidered trifles, and to bless heaven for giving them so good and dutiful a daughter. These, however, are issues which it is not necessary to pursue. My point is that the French have a genius for domesticity, whereas the English have not. Of course the Micawbers were an exception; but if you take even Dickens, who is a kind of apostle of domesticity, it is upon the whole a gloomy idea of the British home that you will gather. And Thackeray's appalling sketch of the Osborne household is scarcely a caricature. The severity of its gloom has been lightened in the last fifty years, but only by increasing the freedom of individuals. Mrs. Clifford, in a clever little sketch among her "Mere Stories," puts the issue from the wife's point of view. Her Mr. Webster is a person very like old Osborne, but he is a rare type now. Mr. Webster will not let his wife decorate her drawing-room according to her own taste; he will not let her friends, least of all her male

friends, come to tea with her ; and he insists that the dinners shall be ordered according to his severely British taste, which prefers cod and anchovy sauce, followed by a joint, to any more inventive confections. Mrs. Clifford's conclusion is that the wife does wisely, if not well, to run away from him ; and it is quite clear that the average man would be very unwise to try Mr. Webster's methods with the average modern woman. Practically it comes to this. For a long time English novelists, who are representative observers, have commented on the tedium of English home-life ; and the progress of ideas has greatly lightened that tedium, not by abolishing the heavy silence or mechanical talk which is apt to fall upon a home circle, but by increasing the facilities for escape. All the tendencies of modern English society are in a sense anti-domestic.

It is the woman, not the man, who makes a home, and the modern woman, if she has a home, is surprisingly often out of it. To begin with, the mere problem of locomotion is enormously simplified for her. Our fathers did not

encourage their wives to go abroad; they questioned the propriety of cabs, and drew the line absolutely at omnibuses. Fifty years ago it was still something of an affair for a woman to get anywhere, and she thought twice before she went outside her own door. Besides there were not so many reasons for going out. The strongest material link of domesticity is the common table, and in the early days of Her Majesty's reign a woman had to dine either in her own house or with her friends. Restaurants scarcely existed, except for men. Now London is sprinkled with them, as if from a pepper pot, and there is scarcely one where a sensible man may not take a sensible woman, and plenty where the sensible woman may go by herself, if she wants to. The added freedom makes for the pleasure of mutual intercourse; it is no longer so essential to a man's happiness that his wife should be a good cook, or at least the cause of good cooking in others. He may reasonably consider whether he will not do well to marry some one whom it is amusing to take to the theatre. There is much more chance

than there used to be for a husband and wife to shake off domesticities altogether, whether for an evening or a month. If they live in a flat the affair becomes simplicity itself: they have only to go away and slam the door behind them; and this suggests rather an amusing point in the international attitude. Flats came in from France, where everybody lives in an *appartement*; and we used to hear that an Englishman's house was his castle, a shrine of British palladiums, which was being ignominiously abandoned for a somewhat improper arrangement borrowed from the undomestic Continent. Yet as a matter of fact the undomestic French live peaceably in their *appartements*, and seldom leave them except to dine with their relatives or relations-in-law, a social duty whose tyranny is not felt among us; whereas directly the Englishman has got his flat, he is struck by the convenience it offers for getting away from it. The habit of running out of town at the end of the week increases, and few people are content with only one annual holiday from the routine of home life. That is the real

attraction of the flat ; if you ask your friends why they prefer to live in a section of a barrack, they will nearly always answer that it is so much easier to go away. But with the disappearance of the house as a social institution the home tends to disappear also. Servants pass more and more into the condition of club waiters, impersonal machines ; and the old retainer becomes a tradition of the past.

Another singularly anti-domestic factor in modern existence is the advent of the bicycle, which not merely tempts people out of doors when under old conditions they would have stayed at home, but opens a vastly wider range of dissipations, even in the country, by its capacity for covering the ground. People are far less limited to their own resources ; the number of tennis and croquet parties which they can easily attend is indefinitely increased, and one has only to read Miss Austen to be reminded how unsettling these gaieties may be.

There seems to me nothing alarming in the prospect, and I have no desire to raise the cry of domesticity in danger.

What has long happened in the serious concerns of life extends itself to more trivial matters ; our families tend to disperse themselves not merely in pursuit of business but of pleasure, and by so doing they seem to me to show their sense. The Englishwoman in particular of the present day has probably more personal liberty in decent society than any kind of woman that has yet been invented, far more than the contemporary American ; and one has no quarrel with the result. She has entirely shaken off the feeling, or the affectation, that it is impossible for her to be happy unless she sees with her own eyes daily that her children eat their pudding and do not get their feet wet. Indeed she is disposed to argue that no one is so much in need of a holiday as the middle-class mother since her occupation is always with her ; no Factory Act comes in to limit her hours of work. I have heard a lady suggest (and it seemed an admirable idea) that one of the ladies' clubs should try the experiment of organising a large *crèche* with a competent staff, where members of the club could deposit their

children upon reasonable terms when they wanted to go off for a tour with their husbands. Some of the most devoted and admirable mothers prefer to take their holidays entirely by themselves, and vary the routine altogether. As an American lady put it to me the other day, "You get into that state that you'd sooner smell any man's cigar than your husband's." The aspiration is un-domestic, but it is a question whether in the end it does not make for happiness that husband and wife should freshen the pleasure in each other's society by occasional spells of absence. Stevenson perhaps stated the case in too extreme a form when he said that the ideal husband was a sailor, but he was only exaggerating a truth. French people have not the restlessness in their blood which makes us wanderers, and they are contentedly domestic; but to be domestic out of a sense of duty and against the grain ends in boredom, and to be bored is not good for the soul or body of any man or woman. English husbands, I believe, are much more to be envied since their wives began to discover that

the skies would not fall if they left their households to take care of themselves for a month or six weeks ; since the first business of husbands and wives in this world is to be good company for one another, and cheerful parents generally make cheerful children. Let us remember Mr. Osborne, and rejoice in the change.

MARRYING AND GIVING IN MARRIAGE

WE are told in the marriage service that matrimony is the institution of God; but Divine inspirations must express themselves in terrestrial formulæ, and since altars existed the human race has always hedged about and beset with a variety of ceremonies man's approach to the altar. In early days these ceremonies bore unmistakable signs of male invention. Primitive man knocked down his wife with his fist as the readiest means of teaching her to love, cherish, and obey him; indeed, where man remains primitive, he does so still. Nothing more clearly proves the advance of woman in domestic politics than the modern marriage. On that day at least, if on no other, man is made to know his place. It is the crowning trial of a Pilgrim's Progress which began in the Valley of Humiliation on the day when he proposed and was graciously accepted.

There are, of course, magnificent and commanding individuals happily endowed by Nature—for no external inheritance is sufficient—who go through the whole business with a flourish, and end in a triumphal procession. But for the average man it is a time of examination, and self-examination. He has to give an account of himself, his income, and his prospects, and, if the other side know their business, it shall go hard but he is convinced of his inadequacy. All tongues are let loose upon him, the flood-gates of personal criticism are opened, and, unless he has a sublime conceit of himself, he will become morbidly self-conscious in an effort to conciliate the good opinion of his future relations-in-law. Either his friends will wonder how that pretty girl throws herself away, or else—which is perhaps harder to bear—they will regard him with the eye of unsolicited compassion. Then, when things are become pretty nearly irrevocable, there sets in the truly appalling business of wedding presents. If there were only some form known of contracting-out for this particular benefit, how many men would en-

thusiastically eschew it! It should be possible for everyone to pledge himself in the course of his life neither to give nor to receive wedding presents, and so spare innumerable heartburnings. Man in a general way has few small wants, and certainly none that can be supplied by innumerable silk cushions, saltcellars, and photograph frames; and he does not desire to give all his promiscuous acquaintance licence to lay him under an obligation. Women, on the other hand, positively revel in the occasion. Whether a woman likes getting married or does not, she always likes getting wedding presents. They may be hideous, they may be absurd, they are almost certain to be useless (except the cheques and jewellery), but it keeps up a flutter of excitement for two or three months to have them dropping in. Let us do women justice; they undertake nearly the whole of the very difficult correspondence that is involved, and by the end of it the whitest soul and the severest rectitude must emerge considerably compromised. There is nothing so demoralising as the necessity of expressing a gratitude which is not felt.

Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus. The final day has arrived, and there is no loophole left to shuffle out of. On the previous evening there has been a family dinner party, composed of two sets of people, who, from the conversation of the past months, are intimately acquainted with all that can be said against each other; the bride's household, at all events, have been in a state of high nervous tension induced by the labour of packing boxes, trying on dresses, and labelling presents, and the evening has passed with a perceptible effort. The bridegroom has probably lamented his bachelorhood till a late hour with the best man, and the only question on the wedding morning is whether he shall be nerved for the ceremony with champagne or whisky and soda. For the first time in his life very likely, he, poor soul, knows a real solicitude about the fit of his coat and the pattern of his tie. He cannot possibly spend the whole morning dressing, as the bride does—a blessed preoccupation—and he saunters about in a purgatory of counting minutes. A good

best-man can do much to lighten his affliction, but the best best-man cannot remove it. Then comes the waiting in church. For a wedding with aggravated circumstances this should take place in a small town where there are plenty of people with leisure to look in, but wherever it happens there will be a crowd of women in the pews. In front of these the bridegroom has to seat himself and stare at the east window, and while he braces his mind to high and virtuous resolutions—for nearly everyone takes himself seriously at this moment—irrelevant reflections upon the designing of a saint will obtrude themselves, and he will be periodically interrupted by exhortations from his supporter, who entreats him by all he holds most sacred not to sit on his hat. No self respecting bride will keep him waiting for less than a quarter of an hour, and during that period he is painfully conscious that the congregation, for want of something better to do, are criticising his collar and deportment. In the meanwhile the bride is preparing for her entrance ; the actual, or acting, father is trying to keep her

steady by compliments on her dress and, very nervous himself, is imploring her on no account to give way. It is a deadly period—a brief and not bright eternity ; but he who waits suffers more than she who is waited for. However, before the eyes of the Church, bride and bridegroom are tolerably equal, and exhortations are administered to each with the frankest indecorum. Still, modern sensibility, without questioning the orthodoxy of the Church's admonition, has decided that *toutes les vérités ne sont pas bonnes à dire*, and the modern couple get the benefit of a Bowdlerised version. Many thinkers have pointed out the desirability of an entirely new form of service, which should be less of an ironic commentary upon the settlements. But, after all, few men remember much of it ; they go through it in something the spirit of theatricals, nervously awaiting cues, and not many wives find in it such consolation as the lady who told her husband that when he was particularly trying she took her prayer-book and re-read it.

Civilisation has at least diminished some of the subsequent terrors. The

wedding breakfast is very nearly a thing of the past, and nobody nowadays makes speeches. The bride stands in the drawing-room, and people converse across her train; the bride's mother becomes tearful; the happy man, already inconspicuous, desires to become more so, and escape the series of insipid congratulations. Acutely conscious that the bouquet of abnormal proportions which has been forced on his hitherto modest button-hole is making him look an ass, he eagerly awaits the moment of departure. But the bride has first to display her silken finery, and after that her travelling dress—which is generally infinitely the more becoming of the two—and this takes considerable time. Where is the woman who would not wish to look like a bride? Where is the man who would, for any less consideration than the assurance of his earthly felicity, consent to look like a bridegroom? However, all things come to an end, and sooner or later he gets away, to begin that contest of personalities in which the less amiable is apt to survive. A great deal has been said as to the discomforts

of honeymooning, but it has compensations; the after effects of a wedding ceremony in the household are unalleviated. The house has been turned upside down from top to bottom: something equivalent to a severe spring-cleaning sets in, and amid its severity presents have to be packed up, wedding cake has to be sent off, unsuspected possibilities of sentiment reveal themselves in inconvenient floods of weeping, the housemaid laments to the lady's maid, and letters from the bride call forth fresh tears and an entirely new supply of criticism. In short, the only thing that can reconcile one to the ceremony and its attendant ordeal, as they are at present practised, is to compare them with the institutions of our ancestors. A wedding nowadays may be a costly and cumbrous form of torture for everybody concerned in it, but it is simplicity itself compared with what it used to be in the good old days; and as for the ordeals, it is really difficult to our modest minds to understand how human beings were ever induced to face them.

THE PATERNAL EMOTIONS

MR. NEIL MUNRO, in his volume of "Sheiling Stories" which he calls *The Lost Pibroch*, has one terrible tragedy. Here is the outline of it. Black Murdo of Clan Artair married Silis of Clan Diarmaid in time of truce; but soon "bloody knives made a march dyke between the two tartans," and Silis pined with thinking long for her own people. Seven years and seven days went by, and Black Murdo came in and found Silis making babylinen. "God, and I'm the stout fellow," said he, and out he went, and drank to the child that was to be in the alehouse at Portinskerrick. But when Silis's time came, there was no skilly woman nearer than Inneraora, and Murdo went down among the Diarmaids to fetch her. His foes gave him passage for his errand's sake, but they took toll of him by the way, his *skian dhu* and targe; and at the last, a Diarmaid came upon Murdo returning with

the midwife, and would have his sword also. They fought for it, and Black Murdo lamed the red Diarmaid and left him ; but precious time was spent in the fighting, and Murdo lost his wife for the price of a yard of steel. The boy that was born when they came there was born red like a Diarmaid, and the skilly woman, that heard Silis's last word, dipped in the goat's-milk, to give him suck, a rag of Diarmaid tartan. Murdo fought no more after that day, for his brain took a quirk from a slash of the Diarmaid's sword, but he taught Rory all the skill of fence he had, wearying for the day when the boy should avenge his mother upon the lame Diarmaid. That day came when Murdo's second-sight showed him the red-haired man with a halt coming to a ford of the sea's ebb, and there Rory, eager for his first fight, met him. Yet "there was a look about the man that made the young fellow have little keenness for the work ;" and as for the Diarmaid, he had no will to draw steel on a lad of his own colour ; so, when Rory attacked at Murdo's bidding, "the Diarmaid only fended, till at last the

slash worth fifty head of kyloe cattle found his neck." Then the skilly woman came hirpling down the shore, late to save, but time enough for rueing—" 'Ken ye the man that's there dripping?' said she to Rory. 'You sucked your first from a Diarmaid rag, and it was not for nothing.' Murdo looked at the dead man's face and the boy's. 'I am for off,' said he at last, with a sudden hurry; 'you can follow if you like, red young one.' And he tossed the dead man's buttons in Rory's face."

The story, sombre enough, is magnificently told; but is it true to nature? Of course there is poetical precedent in plenty, Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum," to quote one instance only, for this instinctive sense of kinship between father and son; but where is it in animal nature? And there, if anywhere, should be traceable this instinct, this physical sympathy between sire and child. Nature, so far as I know it, makes sign only of the contrary. Dam and pup will have caresses for each other after months of separation, a long break in a dog's life; but whelp and sire, once the

whelp's teeth are grown, will be at each other's throats readily enough. Certainly it is wrong to argue from dogs, since in them instinct has been sapped by generations of human interference; and Mr. Kipling in his *Jungle Book* attributes to wolves at least an abiding paternal interest, which a trained observer like Mr. Cornish would very likely corroborate from more familiar experiences. But among human beings, where paternal love plainly exists as a distinct and well-marked type of affection, it proceeds, we hold, rather from accruing associations than from any physical affinity. Flesh of my flesh is true in a very different sense for the mother and for the father. Look at a young mother's eyes over her first-born; there is a rapture in them, an imperious hunger gratified, that no dullness can be blind to. But when the ordinary man, on first becoming a father, looks into his breast for the paternal emotions, what does he find? Nothing, we suspect, in the way of an emotion, except relief at his wife's safety and pleasure to see her pleased. No doubt, just as now and then you meet a Becky

Sharp who has no maternal instinct though she is a mother—perhaps the case is not so rare as one desire to think it—so one man in a hundred goes wild with delight at the advent of his first-born, though its coming mean nothing to him but another mouth to feed. Men past their youth probably care more than others for their babies as babies ; and here and there you find a man with a woman's craving to handle his own infant ; but he is generally 'shame-faced above the impulse, and he is always an exception. Murdo's jubilation, "God, and I'm the stout fellow," rings true enough, but it belongs to a society where children are a kind of wealth, not a luxury, future helpers and companions, not "expensive little playthings." Society has cut itself adrift from the patriarchal world. The average professional man thinks of providing for his children ; indeed, if he has children, he has little opportunity to think of anything else. It never enters into his mind that they may provide for him. The old Greeks desired children, as necessary to complete a man's life ; but they expected to find

in a son a *γηροβοσκός*, some one to tend their old age. The modern peasant or artisan looks forward to the day when his children will be doing well in the world and will help their parents; in many trades he looks forward to training his son himself in his own pursuits. What can be pleasanter than to teach a boy to shoot, fish, or ride? all being aptitudes that he admires in his elders and would gladly imitate. What can be more disagreeable than to teach the same boy Latin grammar, or pay some one else for doing so? A coachman, a gardener, or a gamekeeper educates his son to his own craft, as Murdo taught the boy sword-play; so long as the trade or art has a certain fascination in itself, the boy is a willing learner, and the desire to imitate his father helps the lesson. A groom sees his son ride a restive pony, a gardener sets his lad planting beside him, an artist picks up a scribble that shows inherited talent; these are the things that *cor patrium tacita dulcedine tangunt*—that awaken in the breast a silent joy of paternity. But all that a professional man is likely to perceive in the same

kind is some ridiculous reproduction of his own mannerisms.

So far as this, then, one may accept Mr. Munro's psychology ; if the paternal emotions exist as an instinct, you will find them most traceable in such men as Black Murdo or the Diarmaid—men in touch with wild nature. As far as my own observation goes, those men in whom this instinctive passion for their children is strongest, to whom their children are a piece of themselves—as every child is of its mother—are not the men who care most for their wives. Novelists seem to bear me out in this. Squire Western, you remember, took little pleasure in his lady's company, but he would absent himself from the tavern to have Sophia sing to him of an evening. In Mr. Mel-drum's novel, "Margrédél," there is a striking sketch of another such type, though a more elevated one. Douglas Oliphant is a man of Esau's kind, and he loves his wife indeed in a way, but she is nothing to him by comparison with his daughter. In the Latin race, where the conjugal union is weaker than with us—read Tacitus on the ancient Ger-

mans, or Taine on Shakespeare's women—the paternal tie has always been more in evidence. What did Cicero care for Terentia? What father was ever more impassioned than he for Tullia?

Yet even where the paternal emotions are strongest, I fancy they have a very slight physical basis. They are complex and intellectual, not simple and physical like those of maternity. The average modern man would not have thrown the buttons in Rory's face. Habit and intercourse would have made a tie stronger in his eyes than any of blood. The question of inheritance, again, always affects this emotion; for every man hopes to leave something behind him, if it be only his name; and the instinct, if such exist universally, of desire for a child, and of yearning to the child when born, is not so much a fact of animal nature as a tradition of the race; not so much in our flesh as in our imaginations. The instinctive desire at all events weakens with the conditions of modern life. We no longer aspire to have a son to close our eyes, a daughter to lay us out for burial; if a man hope for company in his

hour of parting, it is generally for his wife's. The tie between husband and wife has strengthened by the weakening of others ; children drift away, the world is very small now, and no one now thinks anything of starting in life a hundred miles or a thousand miles away from home ; yet distance is still a separation, and daily intercourse still necessary, if people are to keep closely in touch. It is only the husband and wife who stay together. They mean more to each other, probably their children mean less to them, while certainly parents mean less to their children, than in the days when it was the exception for a man to pass out of his father's ken for a month ; when the household, not the individual, was the unit of society. Man and wife are still a unit, as appears by the excitement when they become two ; but in the class to which most readers of these lines belong, daily intercourse between father and son is rare, their interests have seldom much in common ; and where is the father who feels, even for his daughter, anything of that imperious fondness which almost any mother experiences for almost any son ?

"SCORES"

HUMAN nature is not yet perfect, and till it becomes so, no form of conversational success will be valued so highly as what we call a score. The very word implies contest and triumph; a score is essentially a witticism at some one else's expense. Yet there are a few men and more women so happily gifted that they can reap the triumph without conveying to their adversary any sense of defeat. With them the display of address is not less excellent because it leaves no one the worse for it; the rapier thrust loses nothing of its rapidity and unexpectedness because there is a button to the foil. Still, it may be doubted whether the great experts in this art of fence have not found their keenest gratification in the repartee which stung; and certainly, of quoted and quotable sayings, few belong to that ideal class which "give delight and hurt not." Yet manners

grow milder ; our grandfathers thought it a very agreeable piece of wit to order coffins of an undertaker for delivery at their friends' houses ; and biographers recorded with glee Swift's savage cruelty, when he detected a poor relation concealing part of her dinner to take home to her children, and poured the apple sauce into her lap, saying that she should not lack sauce for her goose. Perhaps a more enlightened age will read with horror how remarks, deliberately intended to mortify, were not only tolerated but praised in the decent society of our day.

For the truth is that things may be said at present which, if they were not witty, would be simply rude. Mr. Whistler has saved up a great many of them, as industriously as the bee gathers honey, and published the collection in a handsome quarto. And it must be observed that Mr. Whistler himself, and all those who are encouraged by his example to pursue "the gentle art of making enemies," sometimes expect a very small dose of wit to compensate for a vast deal of rudeness. Of course we are talking now

of such scores as come under the usages of ordinary society To induce a man to give a certain account of a transaction and then produce positive evidence that his account is false, makes a very telling score in the law courts, or between the gladiators of the House of Commons ; but in a drawing-room or a smoking-room, it would be just as permissible to give him the lie direct. It may be magnificent, it certainly is a score, but it is not wit. But even outside these happy arenas, where it is the privilege, if not the duty, of one side to make the other appear contemptible or dishonest, there is a tendency in certain societies to push the latitude permitted in scores almost to the same extent. One notices this particularly at those homes of the humanities, our Universities, where the conversation often runs to an accompaniment of snapping rat-traps. It is a most successful score for a young man to demonstrate before an audience that an older man present does not know something which he might be expected to know ; but in point of fact the demonstration does not give that pleasure to a

listener which might be anticipated. To have scored will, no doubt, always leave a pleasant sensation in the mind of the one who scores ; but if the score disgusts the audience, and also hurts the victim, it becomes very difficult to distinguish it from a piece of bad manners.

Sometimes, of course, wit is simply a weapon, which, no doubt, should be used rather in defence than in attack. It is almost indispensable to the diplomatist, who has to parry indiscreet questions. Talleyrand well knew the use of it. "Some say the King of England is dead," he confided to a troublesome enquirer ; some say he is not dead. I believe neither. I tell you this in confidence, and pray keep it to yourself." It would be impossible to refuse information more completely and with a more complete concealment of the speaker's own opinion ; yet nothing could be more polite. Sometimes, however, wit is the only weapon available against brute force, and then the whiplash need not be spared. There is a story of the Duke of Wellington, which, if it is not true, deserves to be. At the time when the British public

was seized with one of its paroxysms over the position of Queen Caroline, a mob caught the Duke walking in Piccadilly, and ordered him to give three cheers for the Queen. The crowd was in a very ugly temper, and few men would have kept their heads. However, the Duke was put up in full view of the assembly, and with a firm voice cried out : " Three cheers for the Queen. And may all your wives be like her ! " It was an appalling retort ; yet by the very assumption on which they were there, it could not be resented : a masterpiece of strategy.

Just because wit is so emphatically the weapon of the weaker, it is disgusting when employed for aggression by those who have the superior position. The least attractive things related about the late Dr. Jowett were the stories of his savage witticisms at the expense of defenceless undergraduates ; it is no part of a teacher's office to give pain gratuitously. Common feeling is against such an abuse, though not as strongly as one could wish. Half the magisterial jokes, which reporters so sedulously publish,

seem in sufficiently bad taste ; yet such witticisms are only less popular than those which fall from the judges. Of course such exercise of judicial wit need only be resented when it is made at the expense of prisoners, litigants, or witnesses, whose misfortune is already sufficient in finding themselves in a court of law. These people cannot answer or defend themselves against such Punch and Judy knocks on the head. Nobody minds a judge scoring off counsel. At the Irish courts, where considerable license of tongue has always prevailed, bench and bar never spare one another. There is a story told of Chief Baron O'Grady, who was trying a case in an assize town where the court-house abutted on to the fair green, and a fair was in progress. Outside the court were tethered a number of asses. As counsel was addressing the court, one of these began to bray. Instantly the Chief Baron stopped the speaker. "Wait a moment, Mr. Bushe ; I can't hear two at once." The court roared and the advocate grew red. But presently, when it came to the summing up, the judge was in full swing when

another ass struck in—whether by the counsel's contrivance or not, who shall say? Anyhow, up jumped Mr. Bushe with his hand to his ear. "Would your lordship speak a little louder?—there's such an echo in the court." Indeed, in Ireland, where deft use of the tongue is not uncommon, it is a little hard for either judge or counsel to oppress witnesses, and tales are familiar of the guileless countryman who has turned the laugh on his tormentor, so familiar, in fact, that I avoid them. One of the completest scores known to me, however, was the achievement of an Irish beggar woman. A friend, not above the ordinary stature, was walking one afternoon with a lady whose proportions were decidedly ample. Without her hat she overtopped him; with it she towered above him. The pair passed the old woman, and she asked them for a trifle; but the lady, whose views on indiscriminate charity were resolute, answered her sternly. The old woman drew herself up, and, eyeing the couple with a penetrating and scornful glance, she summed up in a phrase what she took to be the situa-

tion: "God help the poor man that could'n't say no to ye." Right and left she had bagged the brace of them; and so she sat down happy and contented.

A school of repartee which has great celebrity and which exercises a kind of fascination of terror is the cabman's. What other relation of life is there in which we consciously and deliberately pay more for a thing than its proper price? And after all, when one considers it, the cabman's score is not of that searing wit which kills (as Victor Hugo testifies in many passages of admirable declamation) more efficaciously than the sword. "Can yer afford it?" is a brilliant example of his efforts; "*Thenk* you, sir," with a finely ironical inflection, is the commonest formula. But, indeed, the most unfailing form of score with him is to hold out a large hand and contemplate first the small coin that reposes like an oasis in that Sahara, and then turn his gaze upon yourself, and so on alternately. Whether it be the hansom-driver's Olympian position, or the known partisanship of such an audience as gathers automatically on

the curbstone ; or whether it is the tradition of the withering sarcasms which a being of this privileged race will certainly hurl upon whoever has the misfortune to meet him in argument, most of us either overpay the driver, pretending to ourselves that we do it from generosity, or else fly ingloriously, avoiding the terrors of his eye. As for the omnibus drivers, whose reputation for this species of wit stands even higher than cabby's, I am a sceptic. Never have I heard a good thing from one of them, nor have I heard one repeated at first hand. But what their taste in wit must be I infer from an entertainment which one of them was kind enough to afford me. We were going up Regent Street, where the roadway was up as usual, when the driver pointed out to me a very stout old man with a wooden leg, obviously a night watchman, who looked very much as if he had stumped out of some unwritten page by Dickens. "See me stir 'im up when I get alongside 'im," said the driver, "and then you'll 'ear something. 'E's a treat, 'e is." Accordingly, as he passed at a walk in the

string, he poked the old fellow with his whip. "Hullo, Peggy," he said. "Peggy" looked round, and a slow gleam began to overspread his face. He obviously felt the weight of his reputation, and words slowly struggled to the surface ; one could almost see them rising in him. like liquor in a bottle. But, slowly as we went by, we were nearly out of hail before his vocabulary found vent. It was not fluent, but it was very Rabelaisian ; though the driver assured me regretfully that it was a very poor specimen of what he could do at his best. The slowness did not seem to him at all surprising ; yet that is, I think, characteristic of 'busmen, who, more than others, ought to be quick with their repartee. I have often heard one of them grumble curses against some one who had bumped his wheel, for a space of five minutes ; but he did not get under way till the offender was out of earshot. They are a deliberate race.

Majora canamus. Let us remember some of the sayings of famous men. Kings have not often been witty, except Charles II., who so delighted in a score

that he welcomed even the sharpest at his own expense. Divines have seldom counted themselves precluded by their office from the biting retort, yet I cannot recall many witticisms of this class which are fathered on clergymen. Swift is an exception, and nothing was ever more brilliant than his retort to the English viceroy who bade him fill his glass to the trade of Ireland. "My lord," said the Dean, "I drink no memories." Perhaps among divines should be included Talleyrand, who tempered with epigram a despotism scarcely less formidable than that of Louis XIV. One of Napoleon's generals, risen from the ranks, affected a military swagger, and at table one day, when Talleyrand was among the guests, spoke with ostentatious contempt of all *pékins*. "What exactly do you mean by *pékin*?" asked Talleyrand. "Why," said the General, "any one who is not military." "Just so," said his questioner, "and we mean by military any one who is not civil." This freedom of speech was in no way curbed under the Bourbons: Louis XVIII. had to hear a good many stinging speeches from the man

he so deeply desired to be rid of. Once some of the courtiers were running down the Napoleonic days. It was in the height of the clerical reaction. "Certainly," said Talleyrand, "the Empire was not up to our mark. They only did marvels. At present—*on fait des miracles*." One can see the sneer of that most singular bishop at the mention of latter-day miracles.

But the great, whether they be kings, or statesmen, judges, or bishops, gain reputation at a very slight expense of wit. Indeed, reputations of this sort are largely the reward of nerve; a feeble joke, roundly and confidently delivered in public, is certain of success; yet few men, except after dinner, attempt to be witty in public. For if the triumph of a successful score be great, great also is the ignominy and confusion which attends a joke that hangs fire.

The very best score is sometimes the result of a happy accident, and its owner may acquire reputation by a fluke. Two Senators in America were speaking their mind to one another with all the customary freedom. "I believe upon my con-

science," said one at last, "that you are the greatest rascal unhung." "Sir," retorted the other, sputtering with rage, "you forget yourself." Happily there were bystanders who caught up the *mot* and applauded, or its inventor would never have known of his crushing score. But what shall be said of the best and most triumphant of all scores, those which were never spoken? All of us are witty some time or other with what the French call *l'esprit de l'escalier*, the wit that furnishes the repartee just when the drawing-room door has closed on you, and you are descending the staircase. Calverley has written with his usual happy touch of the Lost Joke. Yet that was a joke which could only have been at best the joke premeditated. Even if he found it, it still had a hundred perils before it; he had to lead up to it and to let it off, each an operation requiring much conduct and delicacy. But when Fate finds an occasion ready and an audience, and, so to say, throws the score at you, and you fail to see the blessed opportunity till it is too late, then how much happier, how infinitely happier, never to have seen it

at all ! Young Members of Parliament must lie awake at nights, one would think, with their brains hot and bursting with all the admirable things they would say if they only had the speech to make over again. But those admirable things cannot now shine in Hansard. Hansard bears witness against them. Outside of Hansard's ken, a man may lay to his soul the flattering unction that he really said on the spur of the moment the thing which he thought of on maturer reflection, and so, after some repetition of the tale, slip into a comfortable belief that he did say it. But the best joys in this kind are but shadows ; and it is better both for your fame and your satisfaction to make a single authentic score with success than devise too late a hundred such brilliant combinations—unless, indeed, you happen to be a novelist or a playwright, when you can pass on the gratification to your pet character.

FIRELIGHT

AN elderly lady, in other respects luxurious enough, remorselessly blocks up her fireplace with mirrors, ferns, grasses, and other incongruous impediments from May till October 1st; and with May back come the mirrors. Without wishing to dogmatise so austere as this dame, one rule at least should be laid down inflexibly. Either light your fire or do not light it; but on no account suffer it to go out. Black coal with a lining of dingy newspaper is ugly enough, but it carries a hint of summer; a grate full of dead ashes is the most depressing sight in the world. Beyond this principle there is endless room for discussion. If you do not light your fire, you will have the applause of conscience; it is an economy of sixpence, and you lighten the burden of your housemaid. But, while the case is still one for argument, if you do not light the fire, you will invariably regret it. It is then that

one realises how much more the hearth is than the mere means of maintaining a certain temperature. In winter, it is to the room what the eyes are to a face,—one instinctively looks to it; it animates the whole. For a few days or weeks one has to unlearn the attitudes of winter; chairs seem to have a “spirit in their feet” that makes them face round to the vacant blackness; and if one is by oneself, neither book nor pipe, dog nor cat, will prevent a sensation of loneliness. There is no other inanimate thing—if indeed flame can be called lifeless—which keeps one company like a fire. The sea is too big; a running river, with the broken water which gives to fly-fishing its peculiar charm among sports, comes nearest perhaps to the flicker and the varying sound of fire, and a river certainly is company as you whip it for trout or salmon. But after all, a river goes on its own way uninterrupted, singing its own song, *in omne volubilis ævum*. Voluble as the stream is, it will not converse with you; a fire you can poke, and it must answer to your mood. But even when left to itself

it is never silent; there is always the faint crackle of fuel splitting, the faint crash of embers falling in, and the purring of flame.

That is the great and eloquent superiority of British over foreign civilisation. Stoves are no doubt the sensible and scientific way of warming any given apartment; it takes stoves, or hot pipes, of some description, to maintain that beautiful equality of temperature which reigns in the British Museum or an incubator. But who that has ever wintered abroad would not cheer to the echo Gibbon's delightful phrase about substituting "the dull heat of a stove for the companionable brightness of a fire"? Open grates hold in them something of the free life of Nature; the hot embers, with their mystical shapes and patterns, appeal to the imagination like a sunset. Fire exhilarates the mind, while it warms the body; one has a definite something to be grateful to for heat. In one's bedroom it is so delightful as to be worth keeping for an occasional luxury; except that it tempts one to sit up and look at it, instead of going to bed, particularly

if it be, as fires in a bedroom ought ideally to be, of wood. For what one may call the poetic effect of a fireside there is nothing like logs. A big hall with a wide hearth, and a pine log or arm of oak blazing between the metal dogs, is one of the most covetable things on earth. Did not Scott instinctively realise this when he wrote :—

“ Ah, Clandeboye, thy friendly floor,
Sieve Donard's oaks shall light no more ”?

But as a matter of fact the logs are apt to need hot-water pipes in a discreet retirement to supplement them, if the hall is to be a happy resort to sit in. Peat has a charm of its own, and peat and wood combined make perhaps the most agreeable of all fires ; but peat should not be severed from its native associations. For London, coal is the thing ; a little more grime makes so little difference ; and as for anything that is not wood, peat, or coal, such as coke, gas, or patent fuel generally—as McAndrew says in Mr. Kipling's poem—let it be consumed in the lower regions. Gas-fires in particular are of all these abomina-

tions the most abominable, and worst when, with the help of asbestos, they pretend to be what they are not. It may be possible to cook excellently over gas—it may even be possible to prevent a gas-stove from smelling—but far from us be the day when the comfortable blaze and glow of a coal-fire will be superseded by this monotonous jet of flame.

Yet, though gaslight has nothing to set against the capricious charm of free fire, flame in itself is so beautiful that one wonders it has not been utilised for an art. There should be an art of pure colour, independent of form or the representation of objects, a music of colour ; and surely an ingenious designer could get wonderful effects out of tinted flames in their contrasts and harmonies, blending or separating the jets at will. The thing could be done in comparatively small compass, and would not need a wide open space like the common explosive fireworks. Perhaps the reason why flame has not been utilised as an art is that, once remote from the hearth, once let loose, flame suggests terror as

hardly anything else can. Some such notion lurks behind the old story of the satyr who went to pluck the beautiful new blossom—the “red flower” of Hindoo tales—and found the biting nature of it. Animals will hardly face it; and fire-worship originated in the East, where folk make their Gods of what they fear. Fire was worshipped not where the glow awaits man after travel through snow and rain, but in lands where the white man’s whole thought, as he looks up at the sun in heaven, sums itself up in saying, “Go down, you brute.” It has been worshipped as the destroyer and as the purifier, but not as the comforter. It is, indeed, rather too fierce a thing to play with. If one sees it at its work among crashing houses, even if one watches the leaping of a candle-flame at something held over it, it is hard not to believe that this moving thing has a sentient life in it, an aspiration to devour. For that reason fire remains the most vivid of symbols, hackneyed though it is by all manner of metaphor. But the fire upon our hearths is domesticated, and no more conjures up images

of panic or destruction than our pet collie suggests a wolf. It is a good, familiar creature, constant to our necessities or our pleasures, and not lightly to be parted with for the capricious insincerities of English sunshine. To lie in the sun and bask is of all delights the most delightful; but there must be time and place and sunshine all together. And when time and place are found, it is odds but the sunshine fails us. Fire is to hand when it is wanted; and after all sunshine is impersonal and extraneous, there is no property in it, but our fire is our own to regulate or to monopolise. That sense of ownership, whimsical as it sounds, must have a solid basis in human sentiment, since it has generated a proverb. You may cut the pages of your friend's new books, you may rebuke his children, you may read him poems in manuscript, you may borrow his only umbrella, but you must not poke his fire till you have known him seven years, and even then if he is a devout fire-worshipper, you will do better to abstain.

MIDDLESEX IN SEPTEMBER

WE were two, and London in autumn was a wilderness with a sky of wet blotting paper. So we tried the country. It was a little station we got out at, and a half-made road took us at once into real fields, where there were rabbits. The sun made a poor attempt to struggle out, but the rabbits cheered us : rabbits are always homelike, if your home is in the country. In the cover where they bolted to, showing their white scuts, there was such a tangle as I have rarely seen. Young maple, dogwood fruited, wild rose, with the hips bright upon it, and a network of brambles thrown over the whole, rich in blessed blackberries. There was no mistake, we were in the country. A little way further on we came upon a mill, straddling across one of your silent English streams, where the long weeds trail in a pike-haunted jungle. A bridge spanned the water, and the whole thing

was ridiculously like a picture. To the left the miller's house, with red-tiled roof and a bow window looking on to the trim lawn that sloped to the bank. The backing of trees had clumps of phlox and sunflower growing under it ; and an old yew swept across the garden wall. The mill itself, red-roofed also, had that mellow air of antiquity which brick in the Thames valley acquires in thirty years. Over the stream one building had a kind of little tower with a clock on it. It looked as if some rich man had ordered the ideal mill to be got up at any cost, for some one to paint it and put a motto underneath out of Tennyson.

Thence we took to the fields again by a footpath. Here it was stubble, cut rather long—for cover, I suppose—with each row of stalks as straight as a ruler could make it. Prize farming, one said to oneself. Guns were popping all round us ; two or three coveys got up rather wild, evidently fresh from a new experience. It was unreasonable to see so much game near town ; this tame wildness seemed as if the whole place was playing at being country. Only the

hedgerows were really wild ; sometimes a great line of hawthorns, almost grown to trees, with great ashes among them at intervals. All down the line were birds innumerable—blackbirds, yellow-hammers, a great flock of wood-quests who went off after their manner, as we advanced, in twos and threes, with loud clapping of wings, and a drove of starlings chattered in or about the hedge for nearly half a mile.

It was beginning to rain now, and we turned into a park. The path ran across a long green slope of the richest grass, studded with huge beech trees. To the left, on top of the slope, was a group of fallow deer, and a little further off a knot of black Welsh cattle—fine beasts, but hornless. To the right the lawn sloped into a pond, green-mantled, with water-hens swimming in it ; beyond it rose a forest of reeds and willows. What a place for ducks ! Four mallard flew out and roused felonious desires in my mind. Partridges have no associations for me : mallard recall snipe bogs, and a gun in the bottom of the boat when one is trout-fishing on reedy loughs in August.

The rain was a torrent now, and at the park gates we asked for shelter. The keeper's wife offered us tea and a place by the fire. One knew she was the keeper's wife by the spaniels in the yard, and very soon we knew a great deal more about her and her surroundings. She was Devonshire, and very proud she was of it; and she had the hospitable ways of her home. A handsome woman she had been, black-haired and ruddy, and perhaps her talk was the most country-feeling thing we met that day. Three year she had been there within a few miles of London, but London she had seen only once in her life; and back there, "go, I says, I wunnut." At parting I offered her what one would pay up the river for the like refreshment, though up the river it is not easy to find eggs as fresh as hers; but she refused it. "I do hate to be covetyous." Even for what she took she insisted upon making up with flowers, and a promise of apples. I am going back for those apples and another such welcome before long.

THE RIVER

You cannot be indifferent to London ; you must either love or loathe the place ; and if you are of its true lovers you will see in it not only fascination but a strange beauty. In the City, in the Strand, in Regent Street, in Piccadilly, there is beauty in the play of light and colour over the changing masses of the traffic and the stream of passers on the foot-paths ; a beauty that perhaps is best felt by lamplight. It is the beauty of mystery, of strong perpetual movements only half understood, the beauty that sets you wondering. But for the obvious charms of London that you can show to the first comer and say, look ! water must always be in view. The Serpentine, with bright sun and a light wind to crisp the water, whether the trees wear the green of May or the blackish-purple of a March afternoon, is as pretty as the first pretty woman you meet in her trim Victoria. St.

James's Park, where the willows overhang the water, and the Whitehall buildings are seen across it, makes a statelier picture. In each case you need the something that has light and movement of its own, keeping even in a fog a faint shimmer of radiance ; for without that the tones of London are dead and heavy. But the parks are properly speaking not London ; they are the ornaments that London wears ; and for the essential beauty, which is also undeniable, you must go to the river.

Beautiful the Thames is, from the reaches where one knew it on the Upper River in Oxford days, through its whole course townwards, making the link that binds Oxford so much closer to London than any speed of intercourse can bring Cambridge. Quite far away—at Goring, or Clifton Hampden, or Oxford even, but certainly at Henley—it is almost a part of London ; it is the Londoner's own playground ; and the people who know best its locks, its wide stretches, and its green backwaters, are not country folk, but dwellers in the streets. Past Windsor it sweeps along through

that rich English country—the “deep dumb river runnin’ by among the heavy trees”—till on the fringe of London it changes its nature, and you can see the two meet and fuse, the river that means play and the river that means work. Off Putney last spring the bank was crowded ; the Oxford boat was just starting for its daily spin ; there was a keen March sunshine in which everything shone like jewels, and the whole of that magnificent curving stretch of water glittered in a light breeze. Up the Surrey side the long outrigger started, fine as a knife, going swift and strong ; and down in mid-stream, with the first of the ebb, and a rag of sail raised to catch the wind, came two lumbering coal barges, broad and solid, riding slow and heavy on the water. They would slip down under Putney Bridge and round the curve by Fulham ; then, passing Chelsea, they would reach the very heart of London, borne on the great artery of its life. The river is the blood and the soul of London ; without it London could not have been. Think of London as the centre of the world’s wealth, and as you look

over the bridges you will see the great stream flowing liquid gold. If it ran yellow in good earnest, as they fabled of Pactolus, it could not be a richer possession

Down by the Pool of London, where the great ships lie touching each other, the masts cluster, and the sky behind them is cross-hatched like an etching with black lines of cordage. But the river that we know and love best—the river that sums up for us the beauty of London—lies between Waterloo Bridge and Chelsea, and the symbols of it are the barges. Up and down they drift with the tide, or lie at their moorings, broad and deep, grimy, yet beautiful in their strong curves, laden almost awash with all manner of goods ; sometimes singly, oftener in strings with a noisy tugboat puffing outrageously at the head of the tow. But the tug is not doing the work ; it is the river, whose laden body carries on steadfastly all these monstrous burdens, majestic in its motion, neither hastening nor resting, nor feeling the weight. That beauty—the grace of calm strength—no one can help feeling who looks at

the stream, and, to gain a notion of its force, watches the race and swirl of all that weight of water round the piers. But the river is incomparable too for the mere charm of colour and line. You may see it yellow in the sun through fog, as if it really ran gold ; often blue of a clear day ; but oftenest of all, and still more beautiful, a silver grey, just broken, like a roughness on the metal, with flaws of wind or eddies. It is beautiful too in the dark, when you have merely the sense of its flow, and a steamer passes, its red light an eye in the gloom, its dark hull showing, and behind that a long trail of black heavy timber boats scarcely discerned. But the most beautiful time of all, here as elsewhere in London, and more beautiful here than anywhere else, is just in the half-light when the lamps are first lit. From Albert Bridge to Chelsea Bridge by the Embankment is a long slight curve ; across the river, the low trees in Battersea Park show faint and dim, a broken line of bluish grey or bluish green, according to the season, beyond the silver grey of the water ; and as you reach Albert Bridge you see the

sharper curve westward and the line of the lamps, both ways. Soft as Chinese lanterns they are, in the departing daylight ; here and there, at the head of every landing-stage, is a red glass, and the eye is grateful for it. Alongside the lamps are the plane trees, and along Cheyne Walk an inner row twinkles through the boughs, and to the west Battersea Bridge spans the horizon with another line of lights. Where the Embankment ends, you have mud banks that take whatever gleam of light there is and shine with it ; a few masts and peaked sails of boats are by the shore ; and the little fleet of river steamers lies at its moorings. These things alter from season to season, from day to day, from tide to tide ; but the river is always there at its work, carrying this way or that the bulging deep-laden barges, outwards and inwards, itself eternally fresh, eternally polluted, disciplined yet masterful, like the strong life of London that it serves.

A SUNDAY STUDY IN HYDE PARK

THREE o'clock on Sunday afternoon ; a strong sou'wester blowing across the spouters' corner inside the Marble Arch ; all the leaves of all the dingy little plane trees tiptoeing it to be off ; belated white calicoes of nursemaids flapping unattractively about their knees ; and detonating down the blast the mellow explosion of a brogue. Half a dozen other voices reached me, all strained to platform pitch, but only the one distinguishable accent. Words shaped themselves as you drew nearer. "I never saw the atheist yet that could tell me why the right arm was stronger nor the lift" (an admirably calculated pause). "I never saw the atheist yet that could tell me why the right fut was smaller nor the lift" (murmur in the crowd). "Ay, but it is though" (in a delicate aside). "I never saw the atheist yet that could tell me" (two grubby hands stretched out in

persuasive illustration) "why this finger was able to stretch longer nor that." No theological explanation was vouchsafed, but the argument seemed to carry weight. From the fringe of the crowd the orator was visible. Battered brown hat on a grizzled crop; still greyer bristles sprouting all over the prominent jaw; spectacles pushed on to the nose-tip; hazel eyes twinkling above them. Behind the thick, humorous roll of lower lip an immense range of snag-toothed gums. Clothes miscellaneous and snuff-coloured; collar absent and replaced by a red handkerchief. He was on the stump and off it twice in the minute, as native to that eminence as any duck to water. In vain I looked for his equal among the rest. Not the Mutiny veteran (by courtesy) recounting without gusto his problematical exploits; nor the resplendent, well-fed warrior who bore upon his manly chest this legend, "1 of the 600," and poured forth a passionate recital that smelt of some one else's stamp; nor the rolling-eyed Bengali who had found Christ; nor the smug respectable gentleman in tall hat, frock coat, and side

whiskers, loyally evangelistic ; nor the lank, long-haired youth on the next pitch, with brown slouch hat, low collar, and floppy necktie, who " did not understand how any one with any sense of risibility could read the Bible without laughing " ; none of them had the true rhetorical manner, the easy pauses, the variety of tone, the vocal compass, of my Irishman. I went back to him. He had got an opponent now, perhaps a confederate ; if so, admirably made up. This gentleman wore a rigid, angular black coat, with one of those square-made felt hats which inevitably suggest independent thought ; and he interposed in defence of the atheists. Argument there was none, but a few interruptions brought on a controversy as to character. The freethinker accused the orator (not without grounds) of calling him a blackguard, and appealed to the crowd to judge between them. " Dress, sir," said the Irishman, " is no critarion of a blackguard ; ye can till a blackguard by his behaviour." He offered to vacate for a period the perilous eminence of his wooden stool. The offer was wisely

declined, and the atheist withdrawing left the orator triumphant and enumerating the years during which he had been "a thorn in the side of atheism"; more than that, the times his life had been attempted by baffled disputants, and only "delivered by the width of a hair."

Amiable and impudent spouter! One would condone even the New Testament which, fished out from some abysmal pocket is, God forgive him! the chief stock-in-trade for his emotional effects. Even this one would condone, for the sake of his inimitable assurance, those merry eyes, and that most exhilarating delight in his own vociferation.

But alas! Hyde Park knows him no more. A cruel ordinance was issued against the collection of coppers from the audience. Only the disinterested among these orators survive, and my Irishman is no longer—at least in public—a thorn in the side of atheism.

DIVISIONS OF TIME

It is characteristic of the human mind to mistake its own local conventions for laws of the universe. The most familiar instance of this delusion is the superstition relating to clothes (a belief which Plato quotes as typical of barbarians), that nudity is necessarily indecent. However, though a convention remains logically no more than a convention, in practice it passes into an instinct, and even a lady in knickerbockers may inspire certain of both sexes with a perfectly genuine, automatic, and instinctive dismay. Even the more abstract notions similarly confound themselves with the fibre of our being; and arbitrary divisions of time produce, in the long-run, not merely a belief in corresponding divisions of existence, but possibly through the medium of that belief erect a barrier and a distinction between age and age.

All this up-to-date talk of *fin-de-siècle* ideas, all this chatter of decadence, is really responsible for many of the extreme types, rather than produced by them. People seem to conceive of a century as if it were a thing ; as if we in its old age must also be tainted with senility, children of an effete parentage, who cannot be expected to possess the freshness, the spring, and the vivacity of our great grandfathers and their sweet-hearts. Yet one goes back fifty years or so, and rubs one's eyes ; for here is De Musset, "the child of the age," lamenting in precisely the same fashion about a nervous, over-strung race, joyless and cynical, which finds its outward symbol in the frigid severity of a universal black coat. Something there was to be said for De Musset's view ; that generation of Frenchmen at least, "*conquête entre deux batailles*," as he puts it, had a right to experience the reaction after a great effort. But for the Englishmen of the present day to take up a parrot-cry like this is massively ridiculous. Look at the young men and young women produced by this fag-end

of a debilitated period; if there is a fault to find, it is that they look too comfortable, too healthy, too untroubled morally and physically. If we are exhausted, it would be interesting to know what has exhausted us. Mr. Rudyard Kipling is, almost beyond dispute, the characteristic voice of this decade; and whatever else Mr. Kipling may be, he is not effete.

This particular illusion belongs to us; none but the nineteenth century has recognised itself, so to say, in a corporate capacity; it is a common catch word; to quote the slang of journalism, a journalistic *cliché*. The papers are chiefly responsible for this cry of an altered world. Always intently on the alert for anything that can be noted as a change, they catch up every innovation, deep calls to deep, the Morning reverberates to the Evening, and every faddist has merely to produce himself (or herself) to be registered as a wave in the advancing tide. And always this metaphor of the century, mixed up with reasoning, haunts them like a visible presence. How will it be in another year? Will they chop

round and hail the infant age, expectant of a general regeneration? One sees the similes from here: the century is out of swaddling-clothes; has given up his bottle; has cut his teeth. Perhaps the twentieth century, when it comes, may dispense with the cry; yet it is hardly possible, the old metaphor has too fine a chance with the year in which the Christian era emerges from its teens. The Twentieth century! it is a kind of coming of age: shall we be proud to belong to it, if we get there? Anyhow, it will be interesting to see how the new period will take itself; cheerfully, let us hope, with a dash of American contempt for the earlier unenlightened world. But whatever may be the general feeling, it is safe to predict a fresh crop of affectations, some newer Wertherisms, appealing to the calendar to justify their existence.

Still, there is no denying the fact that every one to some degree experiences this servitude to an idea. It is difficult to think of people in the seventeenth century as not somehow different in kind from those who flourished in the

eighteenth. History is an old almanac, in no disparaging sense ; for human society has, like the world of nature, its recurring periods of growth, decay, and suspension, its winters, its summers, and its prolific springs ; and these history registers. We, looking back upon the record, are apt, for our convenience, to force the two calendars to coincide. A few dates are always forthcoming, for pegs to attach the structures. In literature for example, Chaucer died in 1400, Spenser just before 1600, Dryden in 1700, Cowper in 1800 ; was not that kind of them ? A moment's thought shows how one may build upon these facts a secular theory of English poetry. The Ionic revolt broke out in 500 B.C. The long walls to Piræus were razed within a year or two of 400 B.C. So the fifth century before Christ is coeval and connected with the greatness of Athens. There were Puritans in England before 1600, but to all intents and purposes Puritanism began with the century. And so forth. Our arbitrary calendar is fixed and immovable ; therefore we cut and pare the great natural periods of history,

annos mundi, to fit in with our joiner's work.

Yet the moral influence of time-divisions is considerable ; and a good many ideas and prejudices that still linger may possibly receive their death-blow from so fanciful a cause as the advent of a fresh century. Many class-superstitions that were taken without question in the early years of the nineteenth century will find people saying to them in 2000 A.D., *non hujus sæculi*, these are anachronisms. Though the millennium craze shows no sign of reviving, the fresh numeral will set the world to its prayers. New Year and its harvest of good resolutions is a proverb or a byword ; and no man, probably, turns a decade in his life without reflection. Among peasants, indeed, age is often a matter of conjecture ; but it is precisely the vice of the peasant mind to sink into a routine of actions which is truly part of the order of nature, varying only with the seasons. Natural divisions of time carry with them a sort of natural sanction. The day is the most imperative of all, the irreducible unit of labour. But the year, which is arbitrary in its

point of departure, has a majesty which the month has lost for us. Even if we reckoned, as they did at Athens, by lunar months (heaven defend us from such a calendar as theirs!), the month would, for dwellers in town, no longer obviously connect itself with the course of nature. Gaslight has superseded the moon, the work of our world does not reckon on her assistance; she is merely a picturesque accessory, to be commended when she chooses to appear, but easily dispensed with. But neither month nor year has, like the week, a religious sanction; the week is our best marked time-division. To say, "I will do it next week," seems to make the purpose more remote than a fixed number of days. The idle man knows these divisions better than any one, and the comfort of a turning-point to look forward to. "Not this week; next month I shall be freer; next year we will retrench." Time-divisions are apt in this way to provide excuses for the unready, and help in paving our way to Tartarus; yet one cannot approve the people who buttress up their virtue with the almanac, and are

wretched unless they get through their weekly quota of reading, their daily instalment of needlework. Trollope, with his so many hundred words per diem, is the extreme type of these in literature, and one doubts whether the best work in any kind is so subservient to times and seasons ; yet to every worker these milestones are a help and an encouragement. A man may set himself a task so big that no small period can bring him much nearer completion ; but he can parcel out his labour and foretaste the joy of achievement in looking back upon a good week's work. For the less happy, whose task has no end to it, who have an endless prospect of monotonous labour that produces no concrete result, such breaks are the very salt of existence, not merely by the rest they give, but by the prospect of rest, which gives to the tract of time some feature in the mind's eye. And there will probably always linger in the dim background of hope some prospect of change, when we look forward to a fresh lap in our course, and some renewal of energy when we enter upon it. The world gets no rest, the universe

has no Sunday ; we do not even, in the majestic Roman way, mark the ages with *ludi sæculares* ; yet if at the close of one of the great weeks of time which we call centuries, we sink under a fanciful lassitude, we may fairly hope to start upon the next with a certain imaginative recovery.



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